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ABSTRACT

This collection of essays discusses writing program administrators' (WPAs') research. The essays pose several questions to characterize WPAs' research practices: "What is WPA research? What characterizes WPA research and the sites of WPA inquiry?"; and "What values guide WPA research?" The 14 chapters are divided into 2 parts, "Writing Program Administrators' Inquiry in Action" and "Writing Program Administrators' Inquiry in Reflection." Part 1 exemplifies WPA research by describing and conceptualizing specific research projects conducted as part of WPA responsibilities, and thereby provides a detailed picture of administrative research. Part 2 then draws on the concrete experiences of particular WPAs and particular writing programs, raising and reflecting on issues about WPA research in general. Each chapter demonstrates that WPAs' inquiry is characterized by a recursive interplay between reflection and action. Some of the many topics addressed in the book include diverse research methodologies for diverse audiences, feminist methods, conflicts between teaching and assessing writing, outcomes assessment research as a teaching tool, the contributions of sociolinguistic profiling, assessing teacher preparation programs, reflective essays, local research and curriculum development, enabling research in the writing program archives, WPAs as historians, historical work on WPAs, the role of research in writing programs, and postmodern mapping. (RJM)

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The Writing Program Administrator as Researcher

Inquiry in Action & Reflection

Edited by Shirley K Rose & Irwin Weiser

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Introduction

WPA Inquiry in Action and Reflection

Shirley K Rose and Irwin Weiser

Our Purpose for This Book

Our aim in preparing this collection of essays has been to develop an understanding of writing program administrators' research. This project arose from our own interests: as experienced writing program administrators whose daily work raises questions about our program's practices, we wanted to explore the implicit principles that guide our inquiry processes. At the same time, we recognize that much of the inquiry we conduct in order to develop and sustain the writing program we lead is not construed by others as "research."

In the past several years, the field of composition studies has given increasing attention to acknowledging, describing, and valuing/evaluating the intellectual work of writing program administration, recognizing that writing program administrators (WPAs) play a critical role in the development as well as application of knowledge in the field. This attention is reflected in the reception the profession has given Janangelo and Hansen's collection, *Resituating Writing: Constructing and Administering Writing Programs* (1995) and the Council of Writing Program Administrators' preparation of a document describing the intellectual work of program administration (WPA Executive Committee 1996). Yet, WPAs' work as researchers is not understood well outside the profession or by new WPAs, and even experienced WPAs need to learn additional ways to identify the opportunities for doing significant intellectual work in the context of their programs.

This interest in understanding writing program administration as intellectual work is consistent with movements in broader academic contexts as well. The Modern Language Association recently published "Making Faculty Work Visible: Reinterpreting Professional Service, Teaching, and Research in the Fields of Language and Literature" (1996), a document affirming the need for English and language studies to value and evaluate the intellectual work of "service" and "teaching," ways in which writing program administration is frequently characterized. The best-known example of work on reframing our ways of conceptualizing and valuing faculty work, Ernest L. Boyer's (1990) *Scholarship Reconsidered: Priorities of the Professoriate* has been widely discussed, and his recommendations have been adopted to varying degrees by a number of institutions. The discussion of WPAs' intellectual work of teaching is well under way, since the WPA's responsibility for writing faculty development and curriculum development is widely recognized. The discussion of WPAs' intel-

lectual work of research, however, has received less attention, though effective faculty development and curriculum development depend upon it. It is to this discussion that this collection of essays is intended to contribute.

The essays in this collection pose several critical questions in beginning to characterize WPAs' research practice: *What is WPA research?* Developing a working definition of WPAs' inquiry will help us to clarify what work "counts" as research. *What characterizes WPA research?* In order to recognize WPA research, we need to describe some of the features and qualities of effective WPA inquiry. The examples presented in these essays indicate that this description must address the following additional questions: (a) What are the sites of WPA inquiry? (b) What questions determine WPAs' research? (c) What methods of research do WPAs employ? *What values guide WPA research and can it be evaluated?* Christine Hult has noted that "[WPAs] need to do a better job of educating our colleagues in academe about the significance of our administrative work and to develop models of evaluation that reflect the complexity of our scholarship" (1995, 127). In order to contribute to developing standards for evaluating the intellectual work of the WPA, it is necessary to identify the values that guide WPA research.

It is essential to the development of the broader field of composition studies that WPAs' research be recognized for its contribution to knowledge making in the field. Understanding the nature of inquiry in writing program administration will help the profession to prepare future WPAs for research required in their jobs. Articulations of the ways in which the work of writing program administration is research and examples of how to do that research rigorously will provide useful guidance and support for practicing WPAs as well. Recognition of their work as researchers is necessary for WPAs to equitably participate in the rewards systems of higher education.

Our Method of Inquiry

Our method of inquiry for describing and valuing writing program administrators' research has been to work inductively, identifying the features and qualities of the research discussed by our contributing authors. We began by asking these questions: "What kinds of research do our contributing authors anticipate will be recognized and respected by colleagues in the profession?" "What kinds of research do our authors anticipate they will need to develop arguments for valuing?" and "What do our authors' narratives suggest about the exigencies, origins, and purposes of WPA research?" Next, we have attempted to relate the characteristics of WPAs' research to shared values of the academic community. Building on this, we have proceeded to speculate about what these characteristics and values suggest about appropriate ways to evaluate WPA research.

The authors who have contributed to this collection represent a range of administrative experience in diverse institutions and writing programs. Contributors include writing program administrators at a variety of types of insti-

tutions such as public research universities, regional comprehensive universities, and private liberal arts colleges. Larger and smaller schools in semi-rural and urban settings in the Midwest, South, West, and overseas are represented. Many of the contributors are administrators for first-year composition programs; others direct a writing across the curriculum program, a writing center, or a composition faculty development program. While most of the contributors are currently practicing WPAs, some of the authors are former WPAs who have taken on other administrative roles at their institutions, and some authors have conducted their WPA research as part of their dissertation projects. We believe the diversity among our contributors is representative of writing program administrator researchers.

What We Have Learned from This Project

The essays in this collection all describe research which has been conducted by writing program administrators and for which the writing program is the site of inquiry as well as application of conclusions. Several shared features and qualities characterize the WPA research projects described in this collection. First, the *purpose* of writing program administrators' research is to understand program practices in order to improve or retain them. Thus, the *site of this inquiry* is those writing program practices—curriculum development, faculty development, and program evaluation. The *participant-subjects* in the research projects at these sites are the program stakeholders—instructional staff, writing students, other faculty and administrators, as well as the WPA. Because these program practices, sites, and stakeholders are diverse, the *inquiry is multi-methodological,* drawing on historical/archival, theoretical, empirical, and hermeneutic inquiry processes. As these essays demonstrate, developing the local knowledge necessary to effective writing program administration requires WPAs to conduct theoretically informed, systematic, and principled research. This WPA inquiry is sensitive to institutional context without being context-dependent in its implications.

These features indicate that WPA research is guided by the following values: it is motivated by a desire to improve writing program practices; it is responsible to the field of writing program administration by answering or contributing to answers for shared questions; and it is ethical in its involvement of participants. Identifying these values shared by the writing program administrators who have contributed to this collection has made it possible for us to develop a list of criteria for evaluating WPA research. Good research in writing program administration has the following qualities:

- It is informed by current theory and previous research in composition and rhetoric, literacy studies, education, and other related and contributing fields, and, in turn, has a potential to inform future theorizing and research in these fields.

- It invokes, corresponds to, and acknowledges values shared by the professional community of WPAs at the same time it shapes, constructs, or calls into question these values.
- It is worthwhile and ethical.
- It is rigorous and systematic and does not squander human or material resources of time, energy, and money.
- It responds to or answers the questions that prompted it or generates new, better questions.
- It can withstand review by peers (even if not subjected to their review).
- It is documented in program records.
- It is circulated at the institutional site through documents and presentations to administrators and teachers and through application of its conclusions in program practices; and it may be circulated beyond the immediate institutional context through electronic or print publication to WPAs and other composition studies researchers in other contexts.
- Its conclusions enable WPAs to justify strategic plans to implement program change where appropriate or to justify decisions to preserve program practices where appropriate.

These nine features suggest an overarching criterion for WPA research: it must require and develop the WPA's agency by deploying his/her expertise and energies in responsive and responsible ways and by satisfying his/her need to gain understanding and insight into the culture and practices of the writing program and the broader institutional context.

The critical significance of both WPA agency and subject position is demonstrated in the accounts of the research projects discussed in this collection. The position of WPA itself authorizes and legitimates the inquiry, as is evident in the WPA's access to existing information and the means for developing new information. WPAs have access to existing information in program records and archives (see chapters by L'Eplattenier, Mirtz, and Rose). They have access to the means for developing new information about the program empirically through surveys (see Weiser's chapter) and through usability studies (see Harris' chapter). They develop an intimate knowledge of the program through the lived experience of their own participation in it over time, which enables them to investigate and understand their own (multiple) subjectivities (see chapters by Anson and Brown, Ferganchick-Neufang, and Peeples.) This subject position also endows the WPA with responsibility for conducting the inquiry necessary for understanding program practices (see Phelps' chapter), assessing their programs' effectiveness (see chapters by Bamberg, Martin, and Schaub), solving problems, and making informed decisions about program development (see chapters by Liggett and by Yancey and Morgan). This kind of administrative access and responsibility is not unique to WPAs as a class of researchers,

but it determines in part the exigency of WPA research, defines the ways in which that research may be conducted, and delimits the potential circulation of its outcomes.

The ways in which WPAs conduct research and the kinds of expertise that research requires are not categorically different from other research in rhetoric and writing studies. WPA research differs because of the institutional role of the writing program administrator. Because the WPA is held responsible for the writing program, research on that program is in the WPA's own interest. Thus, the WPA finds it disingenuous to narrate the story of the research project as though she were a disinterested inquirer. The WPA cannot pose as a seeker of knowledge for its own sake, but must acknowledge that the outcome of the inquiry may have an immediate, obvious impact on many teachers and students. The WPA's interest does not, however, diminish the desire to understand, intellectual engagement with the issues the research projects address, or the obligation and commitment to conduct principled inquiry and circulate its conclusions.

These characteristics, features, and criteria suggest the following definition of writing program administrators' research: *research in writing program administration is theoretically-informed, systematic, principled inquiry for the purpose of developing, sustaining, and leading a sound, yet dynamic, writing program.*[1]

What We Mean by "Action" and "Reflection"

The division of these fourteen chapters into two parts, "Writing Program Administrators' Inquiry in Action" and "Writing Program Administrators' Inquiry in Reflection" recognizes differences in our contributors' emphases. Contributors of chapters in Part I exemplify WPA research by describing and conceptualizing specific research projects conducted as part of their responsibilities as WPAs, and thereby provide a detailed picture of the richness and complexity of conducting administrative research. Though contributors of chapters in Part II draw on the concrete experiences of particular WPAs and particular writing programs, they explicitly raise and reflect on issues about WPA research *in general*. Despite these differences in emphasis, each of these chapters demonstrates that writing program administrators' inquiry is characterized by a recursive interplay between reflection and action. This interplay is, in fact, a feature of the reflective practice of writing program administration: effective WPAs reflect before acting, but they also reflect upon the actions they take. In the case of research projects such as those described in this collection, reflection leads to action in the form of research, while the results of the research enable the WPA to reflect upon the possible actions, such as curricular change or modifications to an assessment program, he or she might take. Effective WPAs move fluidly between acting and reflecting in particular situations.

How We Hope Readers Will Use This Book

We expect the essays in this collection to be of interest to current administrators of many kinds of writing programs, including first-year composition, writing-across-the curriculum, writing centers, and professional writing programs. As we become more professionalized as a group, we are also becoming more interested in defining the nature of our work and setting standards for its evaluation.

Another outgrowth of this movement toward professionalizing writing program administration is increased efforts to provide formal preparation for future WPAs rather than relying on learning from on-the-job experience alone. There are a growing number of seminars and directed studies in writing program administration now being offered in graduate programs in rhetoric and composition across the country.[2] We hope this collection of essays will be a useful resource for those who are preparing to work in writing program administration.

Christine Hult calls for efforts to develop equitable rewards for WPAs' work, cautioning that

> Rather than trying to force a WPA into traditional academic molds, institutions of higher education need to acknowledge the changing definitions of scholarship and to legitimize and reward WPAs for the scholarship of administration as reflected in the diversity of our work. (1995, 120)

Establishing an equitable rewards system will depend upon the WPA profession's ability to develop standards for evaluating writing program administrators' work. A variety of people with diverse backgrounds are given responsibility for evaluating WPAs including peer evaluators such as WPA consultant-evaluators and other external reviewers, colleagues in WPAs' home departments, and tenure and promotion committees in WPAs' home institutions as well as the administrators who appoint WPAs and to whom WPAs report. Evaluators who view writing program administration as non-intellectual work blind themselves to the rich and extended reflection that informs a WPA's acts of inquiry; thus they fail to understand why the WPA poses particular research questions or chooses specific research methods. Evaluators who construe writing program administration as non-intellectual work fail to make the connection between a WPA's acts of inquiry and the reflection in which her decision making is grounded; thus, they will misunderstand what motivates the WPA's proposals for changes in some program practices and reluctance to make changes in other practices. Evaluators who do not know how to value writing program administrators' intellectual work miscalculate the efficacy of the WPA's reflective action; thus, they fail to anticipate the potential of WPA research for transforming not only the writing curriculum, but the broader institutional culture as well. The essays in this collection, by arguing for and exemplifying WPA inquiry, can provide these evaluators with a more accurate and complete understanding of the intellectual work of WPAs.

However, the widespread lack of understanding is not the most serious ob-

stacle to fair evaluation of writing program administrators' research. Methodologically and epistemologically, WPA research is too much like other research in the academy to be truly unrecognizable. The most serious obstacle is the academy's failure to value the focal subject of study—student writing. Many in the academy do not understand that the process of writing is rich enough to generate questions. To value student writing, one must understand the central role it plays in the learning process; and one must believe that learning is the most important goal of higher education.

Notes

1. This is an elaboration of Christine Hult's definition in "The Scholarship of Administration" (1995).

2. At Purdue, for example, we have recently established a "Second Field in Writing Program Administration," a formal program of study at the Ph.D. level.

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1

Diverse Research Methodologies at Work for Diverse Audiences

Shaping the Writing Center to the Institution

Muriel Harris

Writing program administrators engage in wide-ranging types of research to produce knowledge about various facets of their institution. To do so, they draw on a variety of research methodologies, using those appropriate to the institution and the type of knowledge needed. Similarly, because writing centers are structured so that tutoring is not a "one-size-fits-all" form of instruction, writing center directors also draw on diverse research methodologies to gain the requisite knowledge that will help them individualize the writing center. Just as tutorial conversation must match the particular needs and concerns of each student who settles into a chair next to the tutor, the writing center must closely fit its particular student population, writing program, and institution, not a nearby writing center the director may have visited and not the previous center the director may have worked in. Writing center scholars do share much common theoretical and pedagogical ground for the field (Harris 1998), but there is also a localness, a particularity, an institutional identity to writing centers that Dave Healy insightfully captured in his comment about writing center discussion: "Although we sometimes talk about 'the idea of a writing center,' as if there were a Platonic form we could all recognize and delineate, most discussions of writing centers eventually descend to the particular—or at least they should" (1995, 13).

Writing center directors, like other writing program administrators, must necessarily deal with the particulars of their institution—responding to institutional policies outside the program, confronting an array of pressures from various audiences (students, teachers in the program, other faculty, administration), and developing their own programs while navigating the constraints of local resources, politics, and conditions. Writing program administrators—good ones performing their work well—find their administering intertwined

with reflecting and researching. But neither teacher nor administrator research should be viewed as different in kind from other research on writing instruction. In *The Practice of Theory,* Ruth Ray (1993) notes the dangers of setting teacher research against education and composition research and instead advocates viewing such inquiry as blurring the lines between teaching and research. Ray's discussion of teacher research as a form of educational inquiry sheds light on writing program administrators' inquiry because, like the teacher researcher, the effective writing program administrator cannot decontextualize the research from its setting within the program or institution in which the new knowledge will be used. And like the teacher researcher, the writing program administrator begins with questions arising from local practice and local conditions. The knowledge that is made when these questions are pursued systematically, intentionally, and reflectively is that knowledge characterized by Donald Schön (1987) as reflective practice, the act of the reflective practitioner reflecting on his knowledge through inquiry. In *Educating the Reflective Practitioner,* Schön recognizes and amply illustrates the need for the reflective practitioner to deal with the variables in the field, messy as they may be, and to engage in critical self-analysis while doing so.

Louise Phelps (1991) argues that practical inquiry leads to disciplinary knowledge, though bound in origin and by purpose to its particular community because the knowledge will be used in the community to inform further decision making. Such knowledge, in Phelps' terms, is procedural knowledge and differs from propositional knowledge because—unlike propositional knowledge that is theoretical and consists of knowing about a set of possibilities but that does not help us know *how* to act—procedural knowledge, or practical knowing, arises out of the individual's recognition of a set of possibilities for actions, internalized images, descriptions, and prescriptions. The methodologies used to acquire this practical knowing are similar to those of formal research and characterized by being selected to fit the circumstances. As Phelps notes:

> [P]ractitioners develop strategies for informal inquiry that bear an analogic relationship to an array of formal methods. Teachers use available forms of research and scholarship, but practice them in characteristically different ways with potential for their own kind of rigor . . . our practitioners are adapting approaches to fit the circumstances of practical activity focused on curriculum. (1991, 878)

While writing center directors, like other writing program administrators, frequently share their localized practitioner knowledge in print, on the WCenter electronic listserv for writing center specialists, and at conferences, the knowledge also remains site specific for local consumption. It is found in a myriad of documents the writing center director produces: yearly reports, memos, analyses of usage data, journals and notes the director keeps, tutoring training materials and curricula, proposals, announcements and brochures that

present the center to its various constituencies (students, writing teachers, other faculty, advisors, department to which it reports, higher administration), all of which then become data for further study both locally and as a contribution to knowledge in the field (see Chapters 9, 10, and 12). Professional listservs, where discussions about local issues are frequent and intense, are also part of a writing program administrator's reservoir of resources.

The interplay of knowledge for local use and knowledge for the profession is a complex one with borderlines that are, at best, hazy. Locally produced knowledge for use in the particular writing center where it was conducted can—and often does—contribute to the profession at large. For example, in order to revise an instructional handout on fragments for our Writing Lab's files, I looked at several hundred examples of the kinds of fragments our students write and found patterns later described in an article published in *College Composition and Communication* (Harris 1981). To train our tutors more effectively to work with the international students using the Writing Lab, I studied a group of international students to gather their assumptions, preferences, and expectations when they came for tutorials (Harris 1997a). After studying the role of technology and how computers might appropriately be used in our Writing Lab, I described that work in another book chapter (Harris 1997b). An analysis of student evaluations of tutorials evolved into a *College English* article on student perceptions of what tutorials contribute to writing growth (Harris 1995).

Such locally produced knowledge also can contribute to the inquiry of other writing program administrators within the institution. When a writing center director investigates the types of writing students bring to tutorials (see, for example, Powers 1995), the results can, in turn, be useful to the writing program director seeking information for programmatic use about the kinds of writing assignments students are assigned outside of composition courses (see Chapter 8). Moreover, the director of a composition program interested in learning about student writing tasks other than those assigned in classrooms around campus—tasks such as essays for graduate school and fellowship applications, personal writing, co-op reports, conference papers, Web pages, church newsletters, and so on—can consult with the writing center director who has collected data on the varieties of non-classroom writing brought to the center by students on campus. The analysis of data that is gathered locally can have wider applications beyond a particular program by contributing to composition studies in a more general way.

While such locally produced knowledge can be—and is—useful in the wider sense of constituting research that contributes to the field, the focus of this essay is on exploring knowledge locally produced for local use in the administration of a writing center. That is, in addition to local research with national application, some local research has as its goal local application for the particular setting in which it is needed. My purpose is both to demonstrate how necessary a writing center director's institutional research is to the effective

directing of a center and also to suggest that this local research should not lay hidden and unacknowledged in the "service" or "administrative responsibilities" basket where it is sometimes considered to reside. If this case can be made for the need for a writing center director to be able to conduct such research, it will also indicate the need to add such qualifications to the job description when departments seek new writing center directors; it also will demonstrate further the need for graduate study in writing center administration. I present the case here in terms of responding to several questions: What are the purposes of institutional research in writing centers? What kinds of methodologies do writing center administrators draw on? How and why should this research be archived?

What Are the Purposes of Institutional Research in Writing Centers?

The Need to Have a Local, Institutional Fit

One body of writing center research treats the complex question of how the local context is identified and how the knowledge gained can shape the writing center at that institution in terms of setting up, administering, and guiding further development of a center so that it will be an integral fit with its institution and the writing program within which it resides. Like any writing program administrator, the writing center director needs to know about the students who use its services, the teachers who send them there, and the institution that supports the center. The writing center director who ventures out into the institution to start this inquiry cannot expect to engage in formal research that requires an environment in which conditions can be tightly controlled. As Donald Schön notes, the problems of the real world where practitioners live "do not present themselves to practitioners as well-formed structures. Indeed, they tend not to present themselves as problems at all but as messy, indeterminate situations" (1987, 4). Even to set a problem, the practitioner must choose and name what he or she will notice.

What are some of the problems and/or questions that writing center directors choose to notice? Over a decade ago, Janice Neuleib (1986) surveyed writing centers to gather some sense of the ways in which they were evaluating themselves, the types of records they were keeping, and the various research projects in which they were engaged. From the reports of research-in-progress, Neuleib catalogued studies to improve tutoring, training, outreach, technology in the center, and so on. The literature of writing centers is filled with generalized discussions of such issues, connecting them to larger views of writing center theory and practice, but these issues also continue to be studied locally because each writing center director must find his or her own answers and because those answers are likely to change over time. New technologies for writing can bring new challenges to a writing center, student populations may shift,

university missions and goals evolve, new institutional programs that impact a writing center are developed (such as writing across the curriculum, community outreach, service learning, or distance learning), and new approaches to composition instruction in the classroom enter into tutorial work as well. Examples of the kinds of research writing center directors conduct, to gain this knowledge, are described here.

Investigating the Center's Student Population

Writing center directors need as much knowledge as possible about the students who will be coming to the center. What are the salient characteristics of the students who use the center? What are the salient characteristics of the faculty in whose classrooms they are writing? At what levels of ability are the entering freshmen who typically represent a large portion of the students coming to the center? What are the faculty expectations for those students? What are student attitudes about the center and how should the center publicly present itself to encourage students to use its services? What are the most convenient hours to have the center open? How will the center be equipped to work with students with physical or learning disabilities? As an example of research that looks at such questions, Carmi Parker (1997) describes to colleagues on the WCenter listserv her research at the University of Washington designed to integrate her center's tutorials more closely into the first-year composition program at her institution. She examines the textbooks, the curricula being taught and the assumptions the textbooks and curricula make about collaborative learning so that she can consider how their Writing Center can fit most effectively into that paradigm. In addition, she uses their database to find out who uses the center, as well as how frequently and when they come in:

> I answer a lot of the questions raised with the database, which tracks number of visits, dates, times, frequency of returning students, number of second language speakers, the departments and courses from which the students come, whether or not a visit is required, the teachers, and the tutors. Thus, I learn the population of our visitors, when the center is being used, what teachers support it and how, etc. Cross-referencing the written reports that the tutors make on each session helps me to evaluate both student and tutor, i.e., is it working and are we really helping? All of the data in the databases will be included in the annual report along with analyses. The report will go to the appropriate administrators in the English Dept, which funds us, and to the appropriate administrators in the depts, that use us but do not fund us. (Parker 1997)

In addition to the analyses of the databases writing center directors construct, another approach to investigating the students who use the center is to distribute questionnaires. One type of questionnaire asks students to check the most appropriate responses to questions about their use of the center, their perceptions of it, problems with using it, attitudes and outcomes of using the center, and so on. Typical of the questionnaires looking at why students do and

do not use the center was the survey posted to WCenter by Joan Hawthorne at the University of North Dakota, who collected a cross-campus assortment of responses to open-ended questions. As she noted, "There were no surprises in the data, but I think it's important to elicit student input even when you aren't anticipating major discoveries" (1997).

Investigating Tutor Training

Training tutors is an administrative responsibility that constantly needs study and reflection because the populations that use a writing center can shift, and the training as well as on-going development of the staff's tutoring skills must be revised accordingly. For research intended to improve the tutors' performance, there are many ways to study and reflect on the assessment procedures in use. For example, when Maureen Morrissey Archer (1996) examined her use of tutorial simulations (which she terms *interactive exams*) for the purpose of evaluating her tutors in the Writing Center at Christopher Newport University, her interest was in researching her assessment method to determine if it truly results in helping her tutors to hone their skills. She concluded from this study that her "[i]nteractive exams provide data from inside the tutorial which other means of tutorial assessment (such as observing, videotaping, and student evaluations) cannot provide" (1996, 7). Archer's institutional reports do not include her evaluations of her staff because her results are intended to inform her training courses and to assist in the further honing of each tutor's skills.

In the University of Wyoming Writing Center, when they experienced an almost 100 percent increase in the number of conferences with graduate research writers, the director, Judith Powers, and her staff realized they had to rethink their approaches to conferencing. They needed to know more about conferencing with writers engaged in thesis and dissertation writing, and they needed to know more about what had prompted faculty to refer those students to the center. Powers and her staff found that their students lacked genre knowledge and that there was "substantial variation in expectations and models for research writing from discipline to discipline" (1995, 14) in her institution. Accepted tutoring strategies were also found to be no longer appropriate. To meet the needs of their students—and the expectations of the faculty for whom those students were writing—Powers and her staff had to become, in Schön's term, "corrective-on-line" (1987, 272). For as Schön notes, the practitioner's "knowing-in-action is dynamic and 'facts,' 'procedures,' 'rules,' and 'theories' are static" (25). A new conferencing model was developed to include the faculty voice in the discussion, one for which Powers coined the term *trialogue*, in order "to distinguish it from the usual socratically based dialogue" (1995, 15). The model (intertwining the voices of the student, tutor, and major advisor) was tried experimentally for one year and is now in general use, though they are also involved in a study in a more controlled environment, collecting multiple types of data that will permit them to examine the effectiveness of the new paradigm more closely.

Investigating the Institution

If there is an integrated writing-across-the-curriculum (WAC) program throughout the institution, the writing center director has to investigate writing requirements, teacher attitudes, and expectations in that program so that the center can be closely integrated and the tutors trained to work with discipline-specific writing. In the case of the well-established WAC program at the University of Kansas, the research started before the writing center was proposed. Pat McQueeney, of KU, and Sandra Zerger, on a research leave from Bethel College (Kansas), as part of their work in their WAC program, began with the purpose of finding out what types of writing are done at their institution and what support services were needed for the WAC program to continue to be successful (McQueeney 1997b). Using a questionnaire and follow-up interviews along with syllabi they collected, they gathered qualitative data (from taped focus interviews and analysis of the transcriptions) and performed several tests of significance on the quantitative data collected from the questionnaire (Zerger 1997). Their analysis revealed a pressing need for a writing center and helped to define what shape the writing center would take when it opened (McQueeney 1997b). As McQueeney notes, "Hearing the faculty talk about writing emphasized for us that at our school a generic writing center would be a kiss of death. Doing the glossary [of terms used by faculty in talking about and assigning writing] made us realize how our [WAC] office has to keep working with the writing center in order for there to be unambiguous assignments and discussions about writing" (1997c).

In addition to studying the institution's needs in order to have the writing center be an integral fit, writing center directors have to study the institution's goals and plans. If the institution is moving to distance learning and has off-campus classes, the director needs to find out what role the writing center should play and then develop services to meet those needs. If the campus needs a central resource for faculty development or writing assessment, the writing center director needs to research the writing center's role in filling those needs. Interviews, questionnaires, and surveys are the director's tools for this, and multiple perspectives need to be gathered. Because retention is a central mission in most post-secondary institutions, the writing center director needs to study the center's present contribution to retention, to look at the student population it serves and consider whether there are other target populations to seek out, and to develop services which identify how it can achieve these goals. Even for matters such as deciding how to publicize the center, the director needs to find out the best ways to disseminate that information. Answers to this and dozens of other questions depend on extensive knowledge of the institution.

Without such knowledge, a director can unwittingly design, implement, and try to run a center that simply does not fit its setting. As much as some new writing center directors would like to clone successful writing centers on other campuses, they find, to their regret, that cloning doesn't work. Close knowledge of generalized writing center theory, pedagogy, and administration

is necessary but not sufficient. There must also be close knowledge of local conditions—knowledge gained by institutional inquiry. For example, only after I learned that the residence halls on our campus have well-attended hall meetings on Monday evenings did I realize why the Monday evening hours in our Writing Lab were so underutilized. When designing the earliest version of our Internet services, the e-mail part of our OWL (Online Writing Lab), I developed a system which overestimated both student access to the computer labs and also the degree of first year students' familiarity with e-mail. Again, the result was underutilization, and the service had to be redesigned before it became a useful instructional tool.

The Need to Justify the Writing Center to Others

While the research described in the previous section produces knowledge to shape and improve the writing center, another kind of research writing center directors engage in has a different purpose and audience—to justify to those administrators who control the center's budget that it is worth funding. Because writing centers usually do not offer credit-bearing classes or engage in instruction that can easily be seen as a requirement in students' progress toward degrees, many writing center directors live with a high level of discomfort about the security and continued existence of their centers. They enjoy existing in the margins of the student-centered world of their writing center but worry about their ability to keep the center's doors open. They know their work is labor intensive and expensive, a drain on some administrator's budget, and so they seek ways to demonstrate that they should continue to be supported. But the audience to which such proof is to be offered usually comes from different epistemological/research traditions. Acknowledging that difference means that writing center directors also need to present their work in different ways, with different research methodologies. Quantitative data are simply more convincing to most administrators than qualitative results, and so, writing center directors also seek methodologies that produce quantitative data. This may not be the way that writing center directors assess their centers for their own use, but Neal Lerner, a writing center director, acknowledges his own need to provide appropriate data for his audience of administrators for whom quantitative data is more useful:

> My own research into writing center settings has primarily used qualitative methods because it's the processes of interaction, goal setting, teaching and learning that make our work so fascinating. Nevertheless, now that I've been cast out of the graduate school world and have been charged with running my own center, I've learned about a whole new level of accountability. . . . I need to anticipate my audience's needs. College administrators often want numbers, digits, results. (1997a, 2)

Lerner acknowledges the very real distinction between the ways in which writing center directors examine the effectiveness of their centers—asking

questions and seeking answers that are methodologically and theoretically valid for them—and ways in which writing center directors also seek evaluation statistics that other administrators will value. For his administrators, Lerner decided on a quantitative study to investigate whether students coming to their center had higher grades than those who did not come to the writing center. Using their database and grade sheets from each section of the first-year composition courses, he divided the entire group into fifty-point segments by SAT verbal scores (to ensure equal starting points for comparing students who did and did not attend tutorials). By comparing grades within each SAT verbal group, he found that students at the lowest end of the SAT verbal who came to the center benefited the most and performed on average as well in their classes as students who had SAT verbal scores over 200 points higher. Because the students with the weakest starting skills were also the ones who came to the center most often and benefited the most, Lerner concludes that this positive research data is useful "to present to an administrator concerned about supporting and retaining academically unprepared students" (1997a, 3).

There are other institutional justifications that internally gathered data can serve. Molly Wingate notes that she uses her database

> to investigate "rumors" and unsubstantiated opinions about who uses the Center, why and what happened in the tutoring session. About twice a year a faculty member, usually from English, decides to sideswipe me in a large, public meeting by repeating a comment about the writing center he or she overheard. These are uncomplimentary remarks beginning with "Everyone thinks that" or "I've heard that all . . ." —you get the idea. By having four tons of data to sort through, I can really look into these allegations. There is probably some grain of truth to them. If I have already researched the writing center co-dependence claim this year, I have an answer. But if I haven't looked into the topic, I can honestly say, "I'll look into it and get back to you." (1997)

Research into practices in other institutions can be used to affect local conditions. For example, McQueeney used a survey, developed by graduate assistant, Anne Farmer of "sister 12" schools, institutions considered comparable to the University of Kansas. The results helped to convince administrators at the University of Kansas that a center was needed (1997a).

What Methodologies Are Used in Institutional Research?

Applied Social Research

Most institutional inquiry in writing centers is the work of reflective practitioners, and most often they employ methodologies familiar to composition researchers: interviews, ethnographies, questionnaires, data and textual analyses, case studies,

participant observation, and so on. Discussions of how such research is conducted can be found in books and articles on research methodologies and in books on research methodologies specifically geared to the field of composition (e.g., Carr and Kemmis 1987; Daiker and Morenberg 1990; Gere 1985; Hayes et al. 1992; Kirsch and Sullivan 1992; Lauer and Asher 1988; Ray 1993). Writing program administrators can also turn to the field of applied social research where the methodologies employed include a diverse set of research strategies used by those who tackle real world problems such as estimating costs; providing information on operating educational programs; examining the relative effectiveness of alternative programs, policies, and services; and making contributions to decision making by groups. This list of problems to deal with—provided by the editors of the *Handbook of Applied Social Research Methods,* Leonard Bickman and Debra J. Rog (1998)—sounds like the "to do" list on most writing program administrators' desks. Equally familiar are the working conditions sketched out by Bickman and Rog who describe the environment of applied research as being "often complex, chaotic, and highly political, with pressures for quick and conclusive answers yet little or no experimental control" (1998, x). Research questions initiated by clients (or in terms of writing centers, various groups outside the center) can be poorly framed and incompletely understood (xii), and the nature of the research is iterative, not static (xv). That is, there are successive redefinitions of problems, new knowledge gained, obstacles encountered, and contexts shifted. All of these also are familiar conditions for writing center directors who deal with changing demographics for the students attending the institution and/or coming to the center; revolving staffs of tutors, teachers, and administrators; and ongoing shifts in institutional needs and goals.

The assumptions and conditions of applied social science overlap other areas of writing center work as well. As Bickman and Rog explain, applied social research is used in situations where the ultimate goal is knowledge *use*; thus, applied research may result in new knowledge but often on a more limited basis defined by the nature of an immediate problem (1998, x). Because of this emphasis on using the knowledge in the real world in a specific situation, Bickman and Rog note that the purity of theory is less of a driving force than utility. If several theories are useful, applied research will combine them (xii). This reluctance to be tied to a single theory is familiar to those in writing center studies, for as Irene Clark (1990) and Eric Hobson (1994) and others have noted, writing center studies also put aside the need for a unified theory and recognize the reality of multiple theories at work in writing centers. In terms of the research conducted, applied social science draws on various sources of data that form a useful list for writing center directors as well. Primary sources of data (as categorized by Bickman and Rog 1998) can include the people involved (which for writing centers means collecting data from students, tutors, and teachers—the most common data sources in writing center research), independent observation (a category of data not yet widely used in writing center research), and physical documents (a less used category in writing centers, though

institutional documents are useful in studies of university needs, goals, and descriptions of other programs on campus). Secondary data can include prior studies (thus reinforcing the need to archive past research in research portfolios, as discussed in Chapters 9, 10, and 12) and administrative records (institutional reports and surveys, minutes of meetings, interview notes, questionnaire and survey results, and so on). Bickman and Rog list other possible forms of data that writing center directors also draw on: computerized databases, self reports (journals, notes, written records, and so on), and documentary evidence (such as the yearly reports and memos writing center directors write).

Bickman and Rog's handbook offers assistance with a variety of studies typically done in applied social science research, including case studies, needs analyses, formative evaluations, surveys, interviews, ethnographies, and focus groups, thus making their book a useful addition to any writing center director's bookshelf. Needs analysis can be a useful approach to answering questions such as how to allocate funds in the center, how to prioritize the center's services, and how to determine staffing needs (including the perennial question of how to schedule tutors, especially when the center offers drop-in service and the director wants to maximize the use of the tutors' time in the center). Surveys and questionnaires are methodologies that dominate the institutional research writing center directors do, and such methods of gathering user feedback yield useful data. For example, at Valdosta State University, James Inman's survey to determine whether or not services offered in their center met their students' needs resulted in numerous suggestions to "enhance the quality of our performance and the quality of experience for our students" (1997, 5).

In some situations, several methods can be used to collect data. This was the case at Oklahoma State University when Linda Ringer Leff conducted an assessment study to determine the writing center's effectiveness. She taped tutorial conferences, observed others, and conducted a survey of students via an exit poll. Leff then conducted a second study, looking at the validity of the instruments being used. As a result, she revised the survey and learned more about the needs and preferences of students using their center, but as Leff concludes, "[i]n search of a better assessment tool, we will continue to 'experiment' and evaluate our evaluations" (1997, 14).

A variation on the focus group approach is described by Steve Whitney (1997). Needing some formative evaluation of their new writing center at Los Angeles Valley College, Whitney turned to his tutors and organized them as a focus group, discussing a hypothetical neighboring community college that had asked for recommendations for what they absolutely needed to do and what areas of their program they might improve. The discussion that followed turned up numerous items that were then turned over to the faculty oversight committee as well as a subcommittee within the center to incorporate as components of their short- and long-range planning efforts (1997, 6).

Another methodology, participant observation, is most often used in anthropological studies of different cultural groups and, say Bickman and Rog,

"provides unusual opportunities for collecting case study data—primarily for collecting data about 'private' situations that are not amenable to other types of data collection" (1998, 247). For Neal Lerner's research on tutorials of fellow tutors at Boston University—research aimed at understanding what happens in effective tutorials—he chose participant observation. Methodological choices were made as he proceeded, collecting data from multiple sources—interviews, tapes and transcripts, written records, examination of his data by participants, and so on. Lerner argues that "such 'local' knowledge is not only vital to our day-to-day functioning, but can in the aggregate increase our knowledge of the larger field and shape and refine theories of our work" (1997b).

Usability Testing

Usability testing is a relatively new area of research and design that, while familiar to engineers and computer scientists, is less familiar in the humanities. But it has great relevance to any system where humans interact because at the design stage of creating a system, users' needs, abilities, and preferences must be considered and woven into the design. Testing to see how users respond to a system is necessary since designers cannot guess accurately how users will react and cannot always realize what is missing or needed in the design. A classic example of the result of a lack of usability testing is the keyboard of the typewriter (and the keyboard for computers). Had someone studied the act of typing (the way our fingers move, the most frequently used letters, and so on) and tested it, the present-day keyboard may well have been designed differently. But the arrangement of keys is now so universally accepted and familiar that attempts to offer keyboards with other arrangements of keys have failed. "The methods [of usability testing]," notes Jakob Nielsen, "can be used for development of interfaces to any kind of interactive system. . . . Any object, product, system, or service that will be used by humans has the potential for usability problems and should be subjected to some form of usability engineering" (1993, xi). Clearly, it's necessary to understand and study users and their tasks. If not, as Jeffrey Rubin (1994) has noted, systems will be developed that are hard to use because during development, the emphasis or focus is on the system, not the person who is the ultimate end user. Although developers might draw on what seems like "common sense" principles to design their systems, in Rubin's analysis good design principles are not obvious (1994, 4–6). In the commercial world, this means workers will be less productive or products will not be purchased or used appropriately when systems are designed poorly.

In writing centers, this means services will not be used or used only with great difficulty, and interactions between various people will be less effective. A poorly designed sign-in form for students making appointments may not be filled out appropriately by students; a questionnaire sent out to teachers and

students to evaluate the center will obtain poor results if not subjected to user testing. Even furniture arrangement needs to be studied to enhance the collaborative environment and eliminate traffic flow bottlenecks. Many of these interactions take place in physical spaces where tutor and student interact, but user testing is particularly appropriate in writing centers where OWLs (Online Writing Labs) operate in cyberspace and where a growing number of tutors, students, and teachers interact. When the online environment includes resources that students will use without the intervention of tutors, students will interact with those resources, e.g., downloading instructional materials or using collections of links to other sites or submitting papers online. In early ventures of writing centers on to the Internet, writing center directors relied on guessing what students wanted and not on what usability testing might have told them. As a result, many writing centers found their e-mail services languishing from lack of student use (Harris and Pemberton 1995). In our Writing Lab, as we recognized the need for user-centered design and testing, we began to seek user input (Blythe et al. 1998). This usability testing with Internet services is described by Stuart Blythe's (1998) research on how a potential video-conferencing service might be offered on our OWL. Observing student users, asking them questions, and listening to their think-aloud protocols as they tried some video-conferencing convinced us that the system proposed was not likely to succeed. Nielsen notes that think-aloud methods, traditionally used in psychological research, are increasingly used for evaluation of human-computer interfaces. The advantage is that a wealth of data can be gathered from a small number of users (1993, 195).

Usability testing is an ongoing process, partly because systems in the writing center change, and partly because, as Rubin aptly notes, such studies are an evolutionary work-in-progress effort that "requires designers to take the attitude that the optimum design is acquired through a process of trial and error, discovery and refinement. Assumptions about how to proceed remain assumptions and are not cast in concrete until evaluated with the end user" (1994, 17). To complicate matters,writing centers have a variety of end users to be consulted—students, tutors, teachers, and administrators—and a variety of methods to draw on. Discussions of usability testing list numerous research methods such as focus groups, surveys, design walk-throughs, evaluation questionnaires, and field studies.

How and Why Should This Research Be Archived?

Given all the notes, reports, memos, proposals, budget statements, requests to other administrators, data printouts, and other administrative documents generated by all the institutional inquiry described previously, it's appropriate to think about what to do with the paper or computer files where this work is described. This work is both needed for the daily administrative work of the center (e.g., "Where is that printout on daily traffic patterns so that I can schedule the tu-

tors?" or "How did I argue for a pay raise for tutors a few years ago?" or "What did that Registrar's Office memo say about the population of nontraditional students enrolled this year?") and is also raw data for archival purposes and for future study. Of course, as with all paper storing, it's also important to offer a rationale for not assigning that paper to the recycle bin or deleting those files.

Why should a writing center director expend the time and effort needed to set up and maintain a research archive for the center? For a new writing center director who steps into an already established center, a research archive that's already in place offers an institutional memory to dip into, in order to understand the present center and its operation. For the writing center director who continues to run the same center, archives are a useful resource to refer to when presenting the work of the center in various contexts (assessment studies, yearly reports, grant proposals, and so on), to use when questions about various procedures or policies arise, to consult when making various administrative decisions, and to use when comparing the present to past conditions (for example, when questions arise as to whether some aspect of the center has changed or is in need of change). It is also a means to start useful reflection on what the director hasn't looked at lately as well as what hasn't really ever been closely studied. Like other writing program administrators, the director of a writing center can find herself caught on daily treadmill of treating immediate concerns and small problems at the expense of taking a step back and looking reflectively at the larger picture of what the center is presently and where it should be in five or ten years.

Directing an effective center thus involves not only finding valid answers for immediate concerns but also setting goals for future growth. In an essay on viewing writing center administration through the lens of a cybernetic model, Kelly Lowe (1998) notes one of the advantages of this model is its incorporation of extensive strategic planning to look as far ahead as possible. But how can a writing center director do that without an accurate assessment of where the center is and where it should be moving? The very act of setting up a research archive will lead to the kind of reflection that can start producing answers to these questions as well as presenting the director's work when being reviewed. The archive materials will be the basis for writing the statements for the review that demonstrate the effectiveness and the level of professionalism of the director's work. And the archive can and should be an instrument for self-evaluation by the director. When it is set up by topics, what major headings are missing in the research archive? What decisions have been made *ad hoc*, without sufficient study? How professional has the director been in recognizing that a part of his/her administrative responsibility is to conduct such research on a regular basis?

Directors can also use their archives as a resource base to share information with other writing center directors in professional contexts such as conference presentations, listserv discussions, and articles in professional journals. As the National Writing Centers Association (NWCA) moves forward to create na-

tional accreditation procedures for writing centers, a research archive will provide materials needed for the review documents. (A preliminary questionnaire for the future documents for this accreditation process can be read on the NWCA's Web site: http://www.departments/colgate.edu/diw/NWCA.html). Thus, the research archive becomes a substantive record of how the writing center has been administered as well as a resource for future research. And, as it continues to grow and overflow with data, filling cabinet drawer after cabinet drawer like some fast-growing sci-fi or horror movie amoeba, the archive is also a testimonial to how complex the job of running a writing center is.

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2

Research (Im)Possibilities

Feminist Methods and WPA Inquiry

Julia Ferganchick-Neufang

Empirical research in the human sciences is plagued with a confining past. Since the enlightenment, when empirical research in the physical sciences became established as the model of intellectual inquiry, academic research, be it human, physical, or virtual, has been held to standards of objectivism and universalism—both legacies of the positivist empirical tradition. Feminist philosopher Lorraine Code says that the "dominant epistemologies of modernity with their Enlightenment legacy and later infusion with positivist-empiricist principles, have defined themselves around ideals of pure objectivity and value-neutrality" (1996, 16).[1] Although the legacy of positivist empiricism is currently being challenged by postmodern and poststructural thought, scholars across the disciplines agree that throughout humanistic and social studies, positivist scientific research is still promoted as the model by which we judge the properness of research methods. Sandra Harding explains that physics, because it is free from all human considerations, has been held as the model for empirical research, and most other fields judge the effectiveness of their studies based on how closely they can approximate the "objectivism" found in physics research (1996, 44–45).

The tendency to evaluate research based on a scientific model has been imported into rhetoric and composition studies as our field has struggled to gain legitimacy within the academy. Janice Lauer (1995) analyzes three discussions of composition's disciplinary formation in her article that questions "The Feminization of Rhetoric and Composition Studies?" All three accounts, which include Phillips, Greenberg, and Gibson's "*College Composition and Communication:* Chronicling a Discipline's Genesis," Nystrand, Green, and Wiemelt's "Where Did Composition Studies Come From?: An Intellectual History," and Susan Miller's *Textual Carnivals*, suggest that composition scholars have most successfully claimed their academic space by associating

themselves with the "harder" disciplines and by drawing on scientific lines of inquiry. As we align ourselves with science in order to gain status, we also align ourselves with "scientism" and "objectivism," importing methodologies from the sciences and the oppressive baggage that accompanies them, such as the silencing of the personal, of multicultural perspectives, and of women's concerns.[2] My own experience researching student harassment of female writing teachers offers a case in point. I depended heavily upon feminist and postmodern theories in justifying my "alternative" methods including the use of personal experience and other anecdotal evidence, which led me to a fuller understanding of female teachers' position in our discipline. Yet, I confronted continual demands to follow a more traditional research agenda.[3]

"Can you justify your methods?" "Where is your control group?" "Have you quantified your data?" "This might be interesting anecdotal evidence, but . . ." This was the focus of a discussion between myself and a sociologist reviewing my research of Women Teaching Writing. The two-hour discussion focused almost exclusively on methods; barely mentioned were the research results, namely the traumas of student-to-teacher harassment reported in a national study of gender-specific problems in the writing classroom.

As writing program administrators (WPAs) struggle to redefine their work as "intellectual,"[4] the requirements of the positivist empirical model stand as one formidable gap between what we do in the directing of writing programs and what it is that the academy—and our own field—considers privileged scholarship. I argue here that WPAs are continually involved in important empirical research that is either disregarded or undervalued because irrelevant standards of positivist empirical research are applied to it. Further, I suggest that critiques of those positivist methodologies and the redefinition of empirical research developing in feminist scholarship can offer WPAs a way to reframe our work—to understand that work as "scholarly" by drawing from the theoretical tradition of feminist research methodologies.

First, I must identify the problems positivist empirical research standards create for WPAs and describe how those standards serve as hindrances to our attempts to define the work of WPAs as intellectual. Designing and carrying out empirical research projects as a WPA can be a daunting task for three significant reasons, which I discuss in the following section.

The Global Impossibility

Traditional positivist empirical research is traditionally global, drawing on representative samples of large, universal groups such as female students or minority workers. Stephen North describes the researcher's agenda as "framed in terms of generalization, not particularization. Data collected is valuable not for what it reveals about any particular individual, but as evidence concerning the sought-after broader patterns" (1987, 137). However, WPA research is often local, focusing on a particular institution, program, or course.

A discussion that occurred during October and November of 1997 on the WPA-L listserv serves as a telling example of this need to localize decisions. The discussion centered on the elimination of the universal requirement of first-year composition. For every advocate of this change there was an adversary who argued for the need to require first-year composition. As the conversation changed from the pros and cons of the universal requirement to the nature of the argument itself, many postings to the listerv indicated the need to localize this discussion. In other words, most WPAs realized that the need for a universal requirement depends heavily upon location. As with the considerations for a universal requirement, most decisions made by WPAs—and therefore, the circumstances that drive WPA research—must be localized, situated within local conditions and considerations (see WPA-L Archives[5]).

I was confronted with the need to localize WPA work as I prepared for my move from the University of Arizona to Murray State University. I was asked to design a curriculum for MSU's first-semester writing course for the program I would be directing once I arrived in Murray, but my experiences in western Kentucky included all of a three-day campus visit up to this point. Based on my experience at the University of Arizona and at Pima Community College (both in Tucson, Arizona), I designed a curriculum that built on a multicultural awareness and a diverse study body. I was shocked when I taught this course for the first time in western Kentucky, faced with a very homogenous student culture that was very unlike the one I was used to in the West. I realized that no matter how good the curriculum was that I wrote based on my previous experience, it could never meet the needs of these unique students. I had to learn the culture of this community in order to adapt my work to fit their needs.

The Objective Impossibility

Positivist empirical research methods demand that researchers remain objective observers, uninvolved in the events or phenomena they study.[6] WPAs, on the other hand, often are involved in the programs, courses, teachers, students, and so on, that they need to study, thus complicating the empiricist's need for objectivity. When describing the nature of experimental knowledge, North says, "Holding the Experimental community together—its core, if you will—is its membership's allegiance to the fundamental positivist assumptions . . . that the world is an orderly place, a place of non-random causes and effects; that that order exists quite apart from our experience of it; and that the principles of that order are accessible to human inquiry" (1987, 146). With these fundamental assumptions about empirical research, it is not surprising that the often hectic examination of writing program issues carried out by one of the principal players in that program is disregarded or undervalued—even, in some instances, by those WPAs who carry out that work.

I am not arguing that all experience can or should be considered research; I have no intention of following this argument to that absurd end. But, just as

the field of education has struggled to claim the value of teacher research, WPAs must begin to claim the value of the empirical research that they do, even though it might not match the model of science. Furthermore, we need to convince our field and our larger academic communities of the value of this work. Greg Glau's (1996) recent review of Arizona State University's "Stretch" program offers us a strong example of WPA research. This program is a revision of basic courses that essentially "stretches" first-semester composition over two semesters for basic writing students. Glau's is an innovative program, which he designed in collaboration with other faculty at ASU, and the results of his research are encouraging in that they establish the success of the Stretch Program. But WPAs often do this kind of work. What WPA has not designed some new course or some new curriculum to address the changing needs of our students and our institutions? And how often do we track those students who travel through our courses through student evaluations, grades, program evaluation, and so on? Granted, this work is not always as rigorous as the research reported in Glau's study, but effective research in writing programs happens much more often than we see it presented in the pages of our field's journals.

The Agenda Impossibility

Another factor that makes empirical research problematic for WPAs is that "appropriate" research agendas, as defined by scholarly trends in the field, are often divorced from the practical needs and concerns of administration. With little time to spare, WPAs have difficulty juggling the additional workload of a research project that is unrelated to their day-to-day responsibilities, which include faculty development, Teaching Assistant (TA) training, curriculum development, budgeting, scheduling, and placement. While this intellectual work constitutes "research"—for example, researching student progress to assess placement procedures—it may not be valued as such.

As WPA at Murray State University, I was asked to investigate the advantages and disadvantages of our interactive television (ITV) course, which was a first-year composition course broadcast to high schools in remote areas of western Kentucky. I was to teach two first-year courses (in addition to one graduate course), one traditional and one ITV, and write a report of my recommendations for the college—this report would affect future university decisions regarding ITV courses. "Would this report be considered scholarship?" I asked. "Of course not, this is a part of your service obligation as WPA."

By suggesting that research in our field is often divorced from the practical concerns of WPAs, I do not overlook the important research that is, in many respects, the foundation of our field. The work of Janet Emig, Mina Shaughnessy, Linda Flower, and John Hayes has contributed in important ways to our understandings of writing processes. Researchers continue to expand our understanding of student writers and writing processes; however, these researchers are looking for—and finding—universal trends, cognitive

processes, that while useful in developing our skill and expertise as administrators and teachers, have less impact on day-to-day decisions such as hiring practices, student and teacher evaluation, and textbook selection.

Given the conflicts between WPAs' situations and the positivist empirical research standards of universalism, objectivity, and "appropriate" research agendas, is it any wonder that WPAs choose not to engage in formal empirical research? WPAs' research necessarily focuses on local issues defined by geographical and regional contexts and ethnic, class, and other social issues; they are deeply involved with the programs, courses, students, and teachers that are our research subjects; and our work load often demands that we focus our creative and critical energies on carrying out our multiple WPA duties. Given the rigidity of such positivist methods, is it any wonder that the research we engage in on a daily basis—the evaluation of administrative methods, courses, textbooks, curricula, teachers, and students—is disregarded or undervalued? The conflicts that exist between the requirements of our work as program administrators and the traditional standards of academic research create barriers that, whether internal or external, hinder our ability to claim our work as "research," and contribute to the devaluation of WPA endeavors.

Possibilities

Interestingly, these conflicts coincide with feminist critiques of traditional empirical methodologies. Feminist researchers argue that traditional empirical methodologies perpetuate androcentrism by ignoring women's concerns through a dependence on false assumptions about generalizability. As Harding explains,

> We have come to understand that what we took to be humanly inclusive problematics, concepts, theories, objective methodologies, and transcendental truths are in fact far less than that. Instead, these products of thought bear the mark of their collective and individual creators, and the creators in turn have been distinctively marked as to gender, class, race, and culture. (1996, 15)

Working to develop empirical methods that resist objectivism, feminist researchers argue that ethical empirical methodologies must be localized, subjective, and practical. They offer a number of alternatives to traditional methods that include "reflexivity; an action orientation; attention to the affective components of the research; and use of the situation-at-hand" (Fonow and Cook 1991, 2). These methods are ideal for WPAs because they address the very (im)possibilities of empirical research discussed above.

Like WPA inquiry, feminist research is often in conflict with positivist empirical methods because of these methods' dependence on the ability to universalize results. Belenky, Clinchy, Goldberger, and Tarule's landmark study of *Women's Ways of Knowing* (1986) examines the problems inherent in such an universalist approach. Their research challenges the once "universal"

study carried out by William Perry (1970) who developed a model of "human" development that was based almost entirely on white male students at Harvard. Perry's "criteria of selection," which must be "sufficiently exhaustive to account for each variation of message content and must be rigidly and consistently applied," appeared to be valid universal criteria because they defined what it was the researcher looked for in analyzing the data he had obtained.[7] Belenky et al.'s study, however, proved that these criteria were not universal, and that they were biased.

Belenky et al.'s research is one example of feminist researchers who have challenged the notion that universal criteria can or should be applied. They realized the very real differences between men and women's developmental patterns, studying those characteristics of women that traditional positivist methods ignored.

When describing the results of my investigation of Women Teaching Writing,[8] which examines student-to-teacher harassment and gender-specific problems of female writing teachers, I am frequently asked to explain why I did not include men in the survey. My results are often challenged on the grounds that I offer no comparative data between men's and women's experience. In claiming a space for research about women, I in no way intended to exclude the possibility that male teachers face conflicts in the classroom, but I argue that women's experiences, as a group, do not need to be defined solely in terms of their opposition to men's. I claim, in other words, no universals; I claim the right to describe women's experiences with harassment because it happened(s) to me, because it affected(s) the lives of women I know, because the stories need to be told and heard.

Feminist researchers across the disciplines also have criticized the positivist-empirical belief in objectivity, which contributes to the research impossibilities for WPAs. Sandra Harding says, "The common view (or dogma) is that science's uniqueness is to be found in its method for acquiring reliable descriptions and explanations of nature's regularities and their underlying causes. Authors of science texts write about the importance of value-free observation as the test of beliefs, and especially about collecting observations through 'experimental' methods'" (1996, 44). She goes on to argue that the paradigm of science has permeated our ideals about objectivity and value-free observations and that such notions must be countered within both the sciences and social sciences if we are to uncover the hidden biases within them. In other words, while situated knowledges have been excluded from empirical research, Harding argues that we must reclaim this aspect of our work by making explicit our personal biases and views of the world that have led us into a particular line of inquiry.

Research, as Harding and other feminist philosophers have shown, is not and cannot be value-neutral or objective because the questions we ask, the methods we choose, the patterns we see, are all products of our subjectivity. Therefore, feminist researchers suggest that we make our assumptions and our positions public within the reports of our research. Gesa Kirsch and Joy

Ritchie suggest that feminist researchers begin this process by reclaiming the importance of the personal—our personal connections with our research material: "[W]e propose that composition researchers theorize their locations by examining their experiences as reflections of ideology and culture, by reinterpreting their own experiences through the eyes of others, and by recognizing their own split selves, their multiple and often unknowable identities" (Kirsch and Ritchie 1995, 8). Likewise, Harding argues that " the best feminist analysis . . . insists that the inquirer her/himself be placed in the same critical plane as the overt subject matter, thereby recovering the entire research process for scrutiny in the results of research" (1997, 9).

For WPAs who are deeply involved with the programs, courses, teachers, students, and so on, that would be their subject matter, the objective stance required by positivist empiricism seems a formidable barrier to significant program research. Dependence instead on the theoretical critiques of objectivity found in feminist discussions of research methods offers WPAs a basis from which to design reflexive studies and to argue for their validity.

My study of Women Teaching Writing began with my own experience of student-to-teacher harassment. I could not have conceived of this study, nor carried it out with the passionate dedication I felt had I not needed to find a way to make sense of this crisis. To prove to myself that I could be a teacher when faced with harsh verbal assault and threatening behavior from one of my students, I needed to investigate this issue in a larger context than my own experience; I remained personally involved. When writing the results of this study, I was repeatedly told that my own story didn't matter, skewed my research, showed my bias. Good, I thought (and still think), I want readers to know why I'm biased, how intimately involved in these conflicts I have become. This is the heart of my research.

Feminist researchers also have addressed the issue of "appropriate" research, which is often divorced from practical day-to-day concerns of WPA work and which creates research impossibilities for WPA research. Fonow and Cook suggest that feminist research is "often characterized by an emphasis on creativity, spontaneity, and improvisation in the selection of both topic and method. This includes the tendency to use already-given situations both as the focus of investigation and as a means of collecting data" (1991, 11). They offer numerous reasons why feminist research makes use of "situations at hand." First, "theoretical advances in ethnomethodology, phenomenology, and dramaturgy have made it possible, as well as legitimate, to study the taken-for-granted, mundane features of everyday life" (1991, 11). WPAs' work, like "women's work," has been devalued as "housekeeping" and "clerical" tasks. Claiming the importance and significance of such duties, WPAs can draw on the use of situations at hand for empirical research.

Second, feminist researchers use situations at hand because their research grows from problems they experience or conflicts they endure. Like WPA inquiry, then, feminist research is often designed in response to real needs rather than the abstract or universal questions of positivist empiricism. Thus, issues

of staffing, student/teacher conflict, and textbook selection become legitimate objects of study. According to Fonow and Cook, a feminist researcher "actively intervenes in an on-going event as a way to understand a particular process. The researcher changes the situation, then studies it" (1991, 12). The same is true of the WPA researcher who is actively involved in the situation under study; we could not divorce ourselves from the phenomena we study in writing programs even if we wanted to.

Finally, situations at hand are promoted in feminist research because "utilizing the situation at hand is a methodological strategy that is well suited to circumstances in which nonreactive data gathering is essential. Often, the research subjects in an already-given setting have little control over the events either because they have already occurred or because they occurred for some reason other than research" (Fonow and Cook 1991, 12). As WPAs, often we must react to and act in circumstances not of our own making. The use of situations at hand offer research possibilities for WPAs who are too overburdened with day-to-day responsibilities to design research projects unrelated to their WPA duties and allow us to empirically evaluate those concerns with which we often are confronted.

Drawing on the theoretical discussions of feminist research methodologies, WPAs can design and carry out research projects while avoiding the impossibilities of positivist empirical methods. Furthermore, WPAs can draw on this body of scholarship to argue for the appropriateness of their methods, which may not be objective, universal, and "scholarly," as compared with standards set by research in the physical sciences.

But there is a more important reason why WPA research should be guided by feminist research methods. Ours is a field whose work is devalued because it is "women's work." Theresa Enos explains in her recent study of *Gender Roles and Faculty Lives,* "Rhetoric and composition studies as a whole is devalued, in part because it is 'women's work'; what traditional rewards there are in the field have mostly gone to men" (1996, vii). Ours is a field where "96 percent of male writing faculty are full-time while 87 percent of female writing faculty are part-time" in four year universities (Enos 1996, 53–54), and "80 percent of our part-timers and lecturers are female" (9). Ours is a field where the majority of those who teach are underpaid and have little job security. We are obligated to investigate the institutional circumstances that create such inequality and promote such exploitation. According to Eileen Schell,

> As we hasten to professionalize writing instruction and make broad claims for its importance as a democratizing force, we must make parallel efforts to address one of the most pressing political problems in composition studies—the gendered politics of contingent labor. (1998, 4)

Perhaps the one characteristic of feminist research that sets it apart from other methods is its dedication to eradicate oppression, to investigate the ways in which our cultures and our institutions serve to objectify and exploit "others." If we are dedicated to improvement of writing instruction through writing pro-

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gram research, we must work diligently to improve the conditions of those who teach writing. Feminist research methodologies offer us an opportunity to do so.

Notes

1. Code argues that these positivist-empiricist principles lead to a philosophy of knowing in which the knower can achieve a "view from nowhere," which most often represents the position of the privileged and disregards "variable constructions of reality" and "different perspectives on the world" (1996, 16, 39).

2. Because an extensive investigation of patriarchal ideologies in the sciences is beyond my scope here, I refer readers to the work of Sandra Harding (1996, 1997), Nancy Hartsock (1997), and Donna Haraway (1991).

3. See Ferganchick-Neufang, "Breaking the Silence" (1996) and *Women Teaching Writing* (forthcoming).

4. Schwegler, Schuster, Stygall, and Pearce, in "Evaluating the Intellectual Work of Writing Program Administrators: A Draft," solidify the Council of Writing Program Administrators' efforts to redefine the work of WPAs as intellectual. They argue that "Administration, particularly writing program administration . . . has for the most part been treated as a management activity that does not produce new knowledge and that neither requires nor demonstrates scholarly expertise and disciplinary knowledge" (WPA Executive Committee 1996, 92).

5. To review this discussion, use the search term *comp as elective* for October and November 1997 in the WPA-L Archives.

6. See Evelyn Fox Keller's (1992) collection, *Secrets of Life, Secrets of Death: Essays on Language, Gender and Science,* for a discussion of the "objectivity" demands of positivist empiricism.

7. This quotation comes from Bruce Berg's (1989) *Qualitative Research Methods for the Social Sciences.*

8. Julie Jung, Tilly Warnock, and I worked collaboratively on this study which was funded by the Council of Writing Program Administrators. The manuscript *Women Teaching Writing* is currently in progress, but those interested can read my preliminary analysis in "Breaking the Silence" in *Composition Forum* 1996; 7(1):17–30.

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3

Conflicts Between Teaching and Assessing Writing

Using Program-Based Research to Resolve Pedagogical and Ethical Dilemmas

Betty Bamberg

Large-scale writing assessments using direct measures of student writing have become commonplace in university writing courses and programs during the past twenty-five years. Such assessments, whether consisting of holistically-scored, impromptu essays or portfolios of writing, are now widely used to place students within a sequence of writing courses, to verify a minimum level of writing proficiency, or to evaluate students' writing skills at the conclusion of a course. In *Assessment of Writing: Politics, Policies, Practices,* White, Lutz, and Kamusikiri remind us that "assessment is unavoidably a political act" because its decisions "affect the lives and conduct of individuals and groups" (1996, 1). When assessments act as institutional gatekeepers, their effects on students are highly visible. However, some effects on students are indirect and, therefore, less obvious. When assessment negatively influences classroom instruction and interaction, for example, it also may have a significant effect on students' lives and conduct.

WPAs regularly deal with the political effects of writing assessments and their implications for teaching writing. Often they do so under conditions where their control over the assessment process has been sharply limited by mandates from external groups such as Boards of Trustees and state legislatures or by policies established by their own universities. As the faculty members generally responsible for both writing instruction and assessment, WPAs must not only argue against assessment procedures that are based on simplistic, reductionist views of writing development, but also advocate forms of assessment that fairly assess students' progress as well as support curricular objectives and classroom instruction in their program. Because of the complex interaction be-

tween assessment and instruction, pedagogical and ethical dilemmas are commonplace when program-wide assessment is an integral component of or linked to a writing course. Such problems, which typically grow out of conflicts between teaching and assessing writing, must be resolved if WPAs are to maintain the integrity and effectiveness of their instructional programs.

Although not a panacea, program-based research is perhaps the best way of obtaining the information needed to end conflicts between assessment and instruction and to resolve the resulting dilemmas. Both holistic and portfolio assessments generate large numbers of essays and these, along with institutional and program records on student demographics, performance, and progress, comprise a substantial and relatively accessible database. Therefore, conducting *ex post facto* studies using this data is an obvious starting point for program-based research. However, WPAs will be able to investigate a wider range of questions and issues if they embrace a methodological pluralism and conduct original research studies. By using varied methods and designs—surveys, analyses of students' essays, class observations and interviews, experimental, or quasi-experimental studies—to gather data from their own programs, WPAs can investigate the most critical assessment issues within their institutional context and gather the specific information needed to make informed curricular decisions.

The following research studies conducted at the University of Southern California (USC), a private research university in Los Angeles, and at the Los Angeles campus of the California State University (CSLA) demonstrate the complex relationship between assessment and instruction and the use of program-based research to resolve conflicts between them. Both studies also illustrate the special dilemmas that arise in assessing the writing of students who are not native speakers of English. USC traditionally had a large international student population, and prior to 1980 approximately ten per cent of the first-year composition students were nonnative speakers (NNS). During the decade of the eighties, however, substantial numbers of permanent residents began to enroll at USC and by 1990 the percentage of NNS students in first-year composition courses increased to 30 percent (Blum). CSLA has traditionally had an ethnically diverse student population. In Fall 1997, 49 percent of its students were Latino, 24 percent Asian American, 17 percent white, non-Hispanic, and 10 percent African American. Sixty-seven percent of the Fall 1997 freshmen reported they were not native English speakers and 30 percent that they were not U.S. citizens.[1] Almost all of the noncitizens are permanent residents as the number of international students at CSLA is very small. Because NNS students consistently experience greater difficulties with large scale writing assessments than native English speakers, their presence further complicates the inevitable interaction between assessment and instruction and creates additional conflicts.

The Effect of a Common Final Examination on Instruction in a First-Year Writing Course

Background

A common final examination is most likely to be required in large writing programs where most sections are taught by Teaching Assistants (TAs) or part-time instructors. Whenever assessment is removed from the immediate classroom context, both students and instructors view it as qualitatively different from an instructor's evaluation of writing within the course. Students are concerned that they will be judged more stringently or by different standards when their work is evaluated anonymously by unknown readers, while instructors are likely to resent their loss of control, especially when the examination comprises a substantial percentage of their students' final grade. Further difficulties arise when examination methods and procedures are at odds with the course's curricular objectives. In such cases, the examination will lack both construct and face validity.[2]

Institutional Context

The University of Southern California, a private research university in Los Angeles, adopted a first-year writing program where the course curriculum was designed as a rhetorically-based, interactive writing workshop that employed a process pedagogy. However, the course curriculum also included a holistically scored final examination that constituted 35 percent of the students' final grade. The curriculum proposal establishing the program described the examination as having the following functions: "to ensure a degree of consistency in grading across sections of the course; to ensure focus upon the substance of the course, which is expository writing; to allow for course validation" (Manning 1978, 6). Although the examination may have led instructors to assign expository essays rather than literary analyses or "creative" essays, the impromptu format of the exam (one hour and forty-five minutes to write two essays on previously unannounced topics) clearly conflicted with the curriculum's instructional emphasis on process. Moreover, the examination prompts—one based on personal experience, the other on a general knowledge topic—asked students to write essays quite different from those assigned in class where they were asked to analyze issues and support a position using evidence and logical arguments. Both instructors and students criticized the examination topics and "on demand" writing for failing to reflect the program's emphases on process and analysis, and they called for changes in the examination.

In addition, approximately 10 percent of the students enrolled in the first-year course were nonnative speakers (NNS)—almost all international or "visa" students—and the examination posed special difficulties for them.[3] NNS students were enrolled in the same course as native English speakers;

however, they were taught in separate "sheltered" sections. NNS students consistently received final examination grades that were much lower than the grades they received on their out-of-class essays, and both NNS students and their instructors attributed this disparity to reader bias. Believing that the instructors who taught native speakers unfairly penalized papers containing NNS writing errors, NNS instructors requested that the essays written by their students be read separately from those of other students and be evaluated only by NNS instructors.[4] However, the request that NNS students' work be evaluated separately was problematic not only because of potential problems with reliability but because all students were enrolled in the same course. The challenge, therefore, was to reconceptualize and redesign the examination format so that it assessed critical reading, analysis, and argumentation, the skills emphasized in the course. It also needed to allow students more opportunity to engage in the writing process and to give NNS students a better chance to demonstrate their competence as writers.

The Research Study

Because research has shown that limiting the time for writing affects writing quality, time constraints are likely to affect performance on an impromptu examination. Sanders and Littlefield (1975) compared students' writing when they completed an impromptu essay within a single class period with their performance when their papers were collected at the end of a class period and returned the following day for the students to continue working on. Sanders and Littlefield found that students wrote significantly better essays when they were able to reflect overnight on the topic and had additional time the next day to revise and complete the essay.

Time limits create special difficulties for NNS writers, who usually do not fully control English vocabulary or sentence structure and lack familiarity with English rhetorical patterns. However, the relationship between time allowed for writing and performance of NNS students is not a simple, linear one. Barbara Kroll (1990) compared the writing of NNS students when they wrote essays during a sixty-minute class period or at home over a ten to fourteen day period. She found that although "the time allowed for the preparation of an essay can contribute to some improvement for the writer both on the syntactic level and the rhetorical level . . . additional time *in and of itself*" is not sufficient to lead to statistically significant differences (1990, 150). Kroll concluded that time is most likely to lead to substantive improvement when students have learned "a repertoire of strategies for composing as well as to recognize the attributes of effective writing" (152).

Therefore, prior research as well as the program's curricular emphases indicated that the final examination format needed to be modified in several ways. To provide additional time for drafting and revising within the university's two-hour final examination schedule, the format was changed so

that students responded to one question rather than two. To extend the writing process as well as to reduce the disparity between writing assessed on the examination and the writing assigned in the course, the examination format was redesigned as a "prepared" impromptu in which class time *before* the examination would be used to provide preparation similar to the prewriting discussions and activities that instructors conducted for out-of-class essays. To implement this new format, a program committee would select a general topic and related readings. These materials would be available several weeks prior to the examination so that instructors could set aside several class sessions to help students analyze relevant issues and consider arguments related to different positions on the issues. Although students would not know the examination question in advance, the readings and prior discussion would prepare them to write a well-supported, analytic response to a question based on the topic.

Michael Holzman, then director of the USC Freshman Writing Program, asked me to design and conduct a quasi-experimental research study testing the effectiveness of the proposed format.[5] Two composition sections taught by the same instructor were selected to take a "practice" examination prior to the final examination. As most instructors tried to prepare their students for the final examination, practice exams were quite common. In the control section, the instructor followed the regular impromptu format and gave students no preparation. However, in the experimental section he led discussions on a topic and readings to prepare students for the practice exam. Students in both sections responded to the same exam question, and the essays from both sections were then combined and holistically scored. Students who were prepared for the examination received significantly higher holistic scores than students who were not. In addition, the instructor, Holzman, and I informally evaluated the content and development of the essays and concluded that students in the prepared impromptu section wrote essays that were better supported and more effectively argued.

Outcomes and Actions

Using data from this study, Holzman persuaded the program's policy committee to approve the prepared impromptu format on a trial basis. Subsequently, *ex post facto* analyses conducted after the first prepared impromptu found significantly higher holistic scores for essays written using the prepared format as compared to scores from previous semesters. In addition, average scores on essays written by NNS students not only improved significantly, but the amount of improvement was greater than that of native English speakers. As a result, the prepared impromptu format was approved permanently.

I became WPA shortly after the prepared impromptu format was adopted. Despite its apparent success, the conflict between assessment and instruction was only reduced, not eliminated. There was still a substantial difference—half a standard deviation—between the performance of NNS students and native speakers. Although the gap between the writing skills developed in the

course and the writing skills assessed by the final examination was smaller, it too remained. In addition, the prepared impromptu format soon created a new pedagogical and ethical dilemma. Instructors began to prepare their students more intensively for the final examination, often devoting the entire last two weeks of the semester to the process, and I observed that students of more experienced instructors received higher average scores on the examination than students of novice instructors. Although the TA training program was revised to help less experienced instructors prepare their students more effectively, these efforts were largely unsuccessful. As a result, students enrolled in sections taught by experienced instructors had a clear advantage over other students when they took the final examination, an advantage that translated into a higher final grade in the course.

At this point, I became convinced that, given the USC curriculum and institutional context, the conflicts between instruction and assessment could be resolved only if the final assessment were linked more closely to classroom instruction. Eliminating the final assessment completely was not an option because the university's General Education and Undergraduate Curriculum Committees were firmly committed to the concept in principle. Therefore, the program's assistant directors and I began to search for an alternative.[6] After surveying the possible options, we concluded that portfolio assessment was the method most likely to resolve the conflict. In addition to supporting the program's instructional objectives and pedagogical approach, portfolio assessment was also the method most likely to help NNS students demonstrate their highest level of writing skill. In designing the portfolio procedures, we decided that students would further revise two essays written during the semester and also would write an in-class impromptu essay for their portfolio. We also decided that the portfolio would be evaluated during a collaborative grading session and that it would be given a letter grade which instructors would average with students' previous grades during the semester.

This format not only succeeded in linking assessment to classroom instruction and reinforcing the program's objectives and pedagogy, but it seemed likely to be acceptable to the university committees that would have to approve the new format. Because portfolios constituted a completely different approach to assessment, conducting a quasi-experimental study similar to the one for the prepared impromptu was not feasible. However, results from the previous research studies provided clear evidence of the pedagogical and ethical dilemmas caused by the common final examination. Our carefully crafted proposal, supported by our previous research, persuaded the program's policy committee to approve portfolio assessment on a one-year trial basis. Subsequent *ex post facto* studies demonstrated that portfolio assessment not only successfully eliminated the deficiencies and inequities associated with the impromptu examination, but had a positive effect on the program's instruction.[7] As a result, portfolios were adopted as the program's permanent method of assessment.

The Effect of a Graduation Writing Requirement on Instruction in an Upper Division Writing Proficiency Course

Background

Somewhat different pedagogical and ethical issues arise in courses that are designed to meet minimum competency graduation requirements in writing. Every college or university with such a requirement has a number of students who are unable to pass the competency examination (usually a holistically scored, impromptu essay). As the number of nonnative speakers (NNS) enrolled in colleges and universities throughout the United States has increased, minimum competency writing assessments have posed perplexing problems and raised new concerns. Research clearly shows that NNS students consistently have more difficulties passing holistically scored proficiency examinations than native speakers (Ruetten 1994). In a recent overview of issues in NNS writing assessment, Hamp-Lyons and Kroll explain the numerous difficulties involved in fairly assessing NNS writing proficiency and conclude that it "remains a constantly shifting balancing act "(1996, 68). Janopolous suggests that "the most obvious solution to this dilemma may be to abolish WPEs [Writing Proficiency Examinations] altogether, at least for NNS students" (1995, 49). Since abolition is rarely an option, Sweedler-Brown (1993) and others have advocated separate assessments for NNS writers so they do not compete directly with native speakers.

However, evaluating the writing of native and nonnative speakers separately would raise concerns about the validity and reliability of such assessments. Whenever essays are read under different conditions and by different readers, different criteria and standards are likely to be used. In addition, proposals for separate assessments usually assume that the NNS writers will be international students. Increasingly, however, NNS writers are immigrants or permanent residents who have lived in the United States for varying lengths of time. Even when these students have lived and attended school in the United States for many years, they often write essays that are strongly marked by NNS errors, and they are not necessarily more proficient in English than some international students. Decisions about which immigrant or permanent resident students would be evaluated as NNS writers and which as native speakers would be extremely difficult to make and to some extent arbitrary, making separate assessments even more problematic.

Given the limitations of impromptu examinations in assessing writing proficiency and the high failure rate of NNS students, many institutions offer a writing proficiency course as an alternative to a WPE. When these course options use portfolios as the final assessment method, students are judged on multiple pieces of writing that have been composed in a more supportive and authentic context than the one offered during an impromptu examination.

However, even under these seemingly ideal conditions, conflicts between assessment and instruction may arise.

Institutional Context

California State University, Los Angeles (CSLA) requires two first-year or lower division writing courses and an upper division writing course in the major. Approximately two-thirds of the students transfer, generally as juniors, so a majority complete part or all of the lower division writing requirement at other institutions. Of those students entering as freshman, about three-quarters are required to take at least one of the university's two pre-baccalaureate writing courses. (Placement is determined by their score on the California State University (CSU) English Placement Test, a systemwide examination.) In addition, all students who enroll at a CSU campus must meet a graduation writing assessment requirement (GWAR) mandated by the CSU Board of Trustees. At CSLA, students meet this requirement by passing a Writing Proficiency Examination (WPE), which gives students ninety minutes to write an impromptu essay on a general topic that is holistically scored by faculty from across the university. Between 25 and 30 percent of the students taking the WPE fail at each administration. The high failure rate on the WPE as well as the high percentage who must take pre-baccalaureate writing courses can be explained by the characteristics and diversity of the CSLA student body: almost all are first-generation college students, 30 percent are immigrants, and two-thirds speak English as their second language.

Although the WPE satisfies the graduation writing requirement, it is also a prerequisite for the final required writing course—the upper division writing course in the major. Requiring the WPE as a prerequisite is designed to ensure that students are prepared for and can benefit from the instruction in that course. To enable students who cannot pass the WPE to meet the graduation writing requirement and to prepare them for the upper division writing course, CSLA developed an upper division writing proficiency course, University 401. In this course, students receive intensive instruction in small classes and write four or five essays. They then revise two essays extensively for a portfolio assessment that determines whether their writing meets the graduation writing requirement. Those who pass University 401 have satisfied the GWAR and have met the prerequisite for the upper division writing course in their major.

The Research Study

During the Spring 1997 quarter, I conducted a research study to evaluate the various components of CSLA's writing requirement, focusing particularly on the way in which each course built on previous instruction and developed students' overall writing proficiency.[8] Because a significant percentage of CSLA students are unable to pass the WPE, University 401 clearly plays a pivotal

role within the university's writing program. To evaluate the course and its effectiveness, I collected survey responses from fifty-three students enrolled in the five sections of University 401 offered during the Spring 1997 term. Then, I interviewed four University 401 instructors and analyzed the course curriculum, sample assignments, and essays from representative 401 portfolios. I obtained similar data from the required upper division writing courses offered by the Biology, Business, Child Development, Electrical Engineering, English, Psychology, and Sociology Departments.

Results revealed an unanticipated conflict between instruction and assessment. Both students and instructors in University 401 were focusing exclusively on meeting the graduation writing requirement—the first objective—and giving virtually no attention to the second objective—preparing students for upper division writing assignments. University 401 largely succeeded in enabling students to meet the GWAR: most students improved their writing skills over the ten-week quarter, particularly their ability to control sentence-level errors in grammar and mechanics, and passed the course. However, the writing assignments—narrative essays reflecting on personal experience—were most like those assigned in CSLA's lowest level pre-baccalaureate writing course. All the upper division writing courses in the study, on the other hand, assigned papers that emphasized analysis, research, synthesis, and argument. University 401 provided no instruction or practice in this type of writing.

Survey data obtained from 401 students and interview data from their instructors revealed that students and their instructors either did not realize or were not concerned about the difference between the writing expected in 401 and that in upper division writing courses in the major. No one objected to 401's emphasis on reflective, personal experience essays because it contributed to students' success in passing the course. For example, 62 percent of the 401 students rated personal narratives as either easy or very easy to write while only 22 percent rated analytic essays as easy or very easy. Because the essays assigned in 401 gave most students a chance to do the type of writing they found easiest, they were better able to revise their essays to a passing level for their portfolio. Some instructors saw their role as helping students meet a requirement that they believed unfairly targeted minority and second language students. These instructors were content with a course curriculum that focused on students' existing strengths as writers rather than one which asked students to develop their analytic writing skills and write essays they found more difficult.

Outcomes and Actions

Given the dual objectives of University 401, the course clearly needed to be revised to include instruction and practice in writing analytic essays. However, revising the curriculum to teach more sophisticated writing skills without substantially reducing students' ability to produce a portfolio of passing essays represents a considerable challenge.[9] From both a pragmatic and ethical per-

spective, an incremental approach appears to be the best strategy. By introducing small changes into the curriculum and carefully monitoring their effect, a balance between two seemingly conflicting objectives—meeting the requirement and developing analytic writing skills—is most likely to be found. During this process, further program-based research studies will be useful in guiding curricular decisions. For example, a quasi-experimental study might test the effect of modifying some writing assignments to require analysis and synthesis. An analysis of selected marginal or failing WPE essays could identify the most common rhetorical problems so that instructional sequences could be developed to address these difficulties. In addition, the long term goal of developing and extending students' writing skills needs to be clarified for University 401 instructors and students, both of whom are now focused almost exclusively on the short term goal of meeting the graduation writing requirement.

Conclusion

Given the many demands on WPAs, finding time to design and conduct program-based research is often difficult. Nevertheless, time needs to be found because such research can make a unique and vital contribution to developing and sustaining a coherent, effective writing program. Although research conducted at other institutions and for other purposes can be useful, generalizing results to a different setting is not always valid. Moreover, "local" studies are almost always more convincing to the faculty committees who must approve changes in assessment practices and procedures. In the continuing attempt to prevent assessment from interfering with class instruction and interaction, WPAs will find that program-based research can play an important role. By gathering information that gives insight into conflicts between teaching and assessing writing, program-based research can suggest ways to end these conflicts and thereby resolve the resulting ethical and pedagogical dilemmas.

Notes

1. This information was taken from "Facts #21," an informational flyer published in November 1997 by the offices of Publications/Public Affairs and Analytical Studies at CSLA.

2. "Face" validity refers to whether a measurement appears reasonable or accurate to an outside observer. "Construct" validity, on the other hand, refers to whether a measurement accurately assesses an underlying capacity, trait, or ability.

3. *Ex post facto* studies conducted by Richard Lacy, then Assistant Director for International Students in the USC Freshman Writing Program, showed that the average score of NNS students as a group was consistently three-quarters of a standard deviation lower than that of native speakers. Because relatively few NNS students received scores high enough to be converted to grades of *A* or *B*, the final examination had a much greater impact on their final grades than on those of native speakers.

4. Following this request, a research study conducted during one of the final examination readings found no evidence that the performance of NNS students on the examination could be explained by reader bias. This study, designed and conducted by Professor Edward Finegan of the USC Department of Linguistics and Richard Lacy, compared scores received by essays which were rewritten to contain NNS errors with the actual essays written for the examination. Both versions were scored during the holistic reading for the examination, and subsequent analyses found no significant difference in the scores received by the original essays and those which had been modified to contain NNS writing errors.

5. At the time of this study, I was Assistant Director of the USC Freshman Writing Program. A quasi-experimental study is like an experimental study in that it compares two groups: a control group that receives the usual treatment and an experimental group that receives a modified treatment hypothesized to achieve better results. Because quasi-experimental studies do not meet the criteria for true experiments—e.g., random assignment of subjects to groups and groups to treatments—results may not be valid and must be interpreted with caution. Generally, they are used for pilot studies or in educational settings where random assignment is not possible.

6. Jack Blum, Irene Clark, and John Holland were Assistant Directors of the USC Freshman Writing Program at this time.

7. John Holland had primary responsibility for designing and implementing the new portfolio assessment process He and Jack Blum were responsible for the later follow-up studies.

8. This research study was supported by a creative leave grant from CSLA.

9. Plans for revising the University 401 are under consideration; however, no changes have been implemented yet.

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4

Outcomes Assessment Research as a Teaching Tool

Wanda Martin

Throughout the 1990s, under pressure for accountability from legislators and taxpayers, public institutions tried to devise ways of assessing how well their students are meeting educational objectives. While some faculty regard assessment as an attack on their professional integrity, others see it as a new way of looking at their work and that of their students that may provide unexpected information and may confirm or challenge accepted ways of teaching. Like most writing program administrators, I have a mixed agenda. I must answer to upper administrators, other faculty, parents, and the undergraduate student body for the quality of instruction students receive in their first-year composition courses. Therefore, I know that it's important to be able to point to specific measures of performance. As a writing teacher, I am aware of how complex such performances are, how little they yield to simple measures. As a researcher, I have been interested in the idea of "good writing" and have studied how readers identify that elusive substance. But it's my role as a teacher of teachers that has shaped the assessment project in the program I direct.

The Freshman English teaching staff consists almost entirely of graduate teaching assistants, students pursuing Master's degrees and doctorates in literature, creative writing, professional writing, and rhetoric. These people think of themselves, quite rightly, as professionals. Working from their own knowledge and experience, they design and carry out their courses in composition and in technical writing, their prose and poetry workshops, their surveys of literature. Several of them serve each year on the Freshman English Committee, and others work as administrative interns or collaborate on projects in curriculum and textbook development. I think of myself as having three generations of students. I owe a different duty to each of these generations of students: the beginning undergraduates who take our English 101 and 102 courses, the less experienced graduate students just learning the arts of teaching, and those who have chosen to work more extensively in composition. The latter group is learning how programs work, how they fit in the larger institutional context, how teachers learn

to teach. Even the members of this latter group will not, for the most part, be "composition specialists" when they graduate. But many of our graduates will work with composition programs in their departments, and all who find academic employment will be involved with undergraduate teaching. My interest is in teaching these graduate students all I can about how to work effectively in the next stages of their professional lives, wherever they may land.

This chapter recounts our process in building an assessment program and argues that outcomes assessment not only can help us to see what we are doing well and what needs attention, it also can help to increase the quantity and quality of faculty conversation about teaching and can provide opportunities for interested graduate students to participate in the design and execution of research with real-world significance. This is very much a work in progress, and I have tried to convey truthfully the difficulties and limitations of the enterprise as well as some of the surprise, challenge, and delight it already has brought us.

Groundwork: 1995–1996

A change in program administration in early 1995 triggered a wide-ranging discussion about what we were teaching in our two-course first-year writing sequence, how we were teaching it, and how we were educating the teaching staff. The Freshman English Committee, which sets program policy and advises the faculty program director on implementing it, is the only committee in our department whose majority is made up of graduate students. Its members take seriously their responsibility to guide an effective program and to secure professional working conditions for their constituents. A survey conducted by a sub-committee revealed a teaching staff unclear about its goals and deeply conflicted as to what constitutes good practice in teaching writing and in evaluating student work. Many TAs felt demoralized and disempowered by their sense that, while some faculty members taught them to think of composing as a process of inquiry, the program's core practices required them to value the production of "clean" if sometimes shallow impromptu essays over the less predictable output of genuine exploration.

In the wake of this survey, the committee acted to reframe the course objectives to emphasize composing as a process of inquiry and to replace the existing final examination with an evaluation of students' revised work in portfolios. But we knew that was only a start, and that we could accomplish little without involving everyone in rethinking the program's goals and practices. How clearly are our program's purpose, philosophy, and goals articulated? How do we measure how well students are meeting the stated course objectives? How well do our program's goals match the needs and expectations of our constituencies—students, faculty in various disciplines, eventual employers? What agreements do we share about the qualities of "good writing"? How can we engage the whole staff in developing such agreements and in taking fuller responsibility for their own work?

Getting Underway: Fall 1996

In September 1996, a new Freshman English Committee convened, with only one or two members carried over from the previous year. This necessitated orienting new members to the issues at hand, the sort of two-steps-forward, one-step-back process endemic to systems of this kind that often prompts program directors to proceed without fully involving the committee. Sometimes it seems easier to design and implement a project alone than to collaborate with people coming from many unpredictable directions. But if the Teaching Assistantship is to be a genuine part of professional education rather than just financial aid or cheap staffing, it's essential to take the time to involve graduate students, elicit their thinking, and educate them to see the program in its larger context. So we began by reviewing the reformulated course objective statements.

The effort to reframe from product-oriented to process-oriented statements was only partly successful: while we seek to teach students how to proceed in their composing efforts, the evidence of that learning, other than what the instructor can observe in interaction with the student, is most frequently embodied in the written product. Perhaps this seems too obvious to say in the present context. But the discussion helped us to articulate a consensus that the primary mission of the program is, in the terms James Moffett used in *Teaching the Universe of Discourse* (1968), teaching *how to* rather than teaching *that*. I was a little surprised to learn (again) that not everyone on the committee had considered this sort of distinction. But this consensus has important implications for the way we teach and the ways we measure our success.

Deciding that we had done about as much as we could with the course objectives, we asked and tried to answer a couple of fundamental questions: First, what values justify requiring every undergraduate to take six semester hours of first-year composition? Or, what difference does it make to have students achieve our course goals?

I did not expect to answer this definitively, but asking it is an important part of educating committee members. Graduate students and some faculty tend to assume that the value of writing instruction, with all of the humanistic and literary baggage it typically carries, is obvious to everyone. We needed to think about how course objectives like "able to evaluate evidence presented in a written argument" might support goals outside the English Department. Committee members with divergent backgrounds had much to contribute here. One, who had begun her undergraduate work in engineering, observed that the operations students perform in composition classes have parallels in other fields: analyzing information, comparing items, forming classes, identifying causes and effects. Another pointed out that practitioners in most disciplines advance knowledge by making arguments supported by evidence. Others recounted experience with professors who would not read work, no matter how inventive or insightful, if the writer used language ineptly or failed to edit carefully. Because I have observed that graduate students generally know little

about how universities work, we talked about the role of the "service course" in the university, illuminating how it profits the English Department to widen its focus in the first-year writing courses and considering some of the costs of that wider role. Thus, committee members began to think about the writing course as a multi-party transaction rather than a simple matter of transmission.

The second question was a little less abstract: Theoretically, our end-of-semester grading establishes the degree to which students have achieved the course objectives. How could we assess the degree to which our courses are helping students accomplish those larger goals that justify the existence of the objectives?

Committee members suggested several methods to reveal what we're teaching: Ask the students. Ask them now and ask them again in two years. Ask other faculty members what they observe about students' writing skills. Invite faculty from other disciplines to read and evaluate some work from Freshman Composition courses. Find out what kinds of writing assignments students are asked to address in other courses. Create opportunities for Freshman English teachers to read student work written in other disciplines. Investigate the problems students bring to the campus Writing Lab after having taken composition. Survey employers about their experience with our students' writing skills. Research how students fare on later writing tests, such as the Writing Assessment of the Graduate Management Admission Test.

Some members quickly pointed out that there were two questions here, and that the first, whether our end-of-semester grading in fact measures students' learning against the course objectives, is prior to the second. They argued that the first step should be an analytic look at student work, separate from the considerations of effort, participation, and progress that teachers bring to the grading process. In grading, they explained, they took the final product and asked whether, as a whole, the work supported sending the student to the next level of instruction. Because the next level of instruction usually translates to "my class next semester," the reference is highly internal. The course objectives serve as guidelines to planning and practice and help students know what they're supposed to be learning, but they have little direct application in the grading process itself. Maybe, these instructors said, we internalize the objectives and look for evidence of them when we grade. And maybe we don't, or maybe some of us internalize and apply them differently than others do.

We accepted the argument that before we could usefully look at student work in its larger context we needed to understand better how we look at it in our own department. So, we ended up asking a very open-ended question: What would we see if we took a sample of student work and read it analytically, against the objectives? What would that exercise tell us about student work and about our reading practices? We decided to begin with an analytic reading of a sample of student work, taking a sample of portfolios as evidence of what students had learned in English 101 and 102 and using what readers reported to characterize that work: We claim to teach X. How much X do we see in this piece of writing?

Although I had formulated the initial questions, student members of the committee quickly took charge, shaping an inquiry process with definable stages, leading the program in an extended act of composing much like the ones we encourage our first-year students to pursue. Two of them agreed to help design the first round of the process and to consider how to examine the data it would generate. Because we were not yet under pressure to report to an outside audience, we had the luxury of learning on the job, posing and reformulating our questions and thinking together about how to look for answers. Some of us sought out or had previously read work on program assessment by Lester Faigley et al. (1985), Edward White (1994), Brian Huot (1996), and others, which provided useful background. But given our goals, we thought it was important to create a process that reflected our local practice and served our particular needs rather than to rely on other people's models.

My own research into questions of writing quality and evaluation has been qualitative. I typically begin with a wide-open question such as the one our committee was asking and then ask myself, "How can I arrange to see that practice in action in a way that will yield a record of the proceedings?" When I know what the "data" will look like, I think about how to analyze and interpret it. From this project, I will eventually need a body of quantitative information I can use for administrative purposes, to report what the program is accomplishing. But my skepticism of quantitative measures in writing assessment necessitates that I embed such data in a rich interpretation. For the purposes of shaping program pedagogy and educating future faculty, qualitative information about how we do what we do, and why, will be far more useful than numbers. Any numbers generated, in short, should illuminate our qualitative descriptions, not dominate or replace them. Rather than hamstring my collaborators with prior constraints as to design and method, I wanted to free them to look at a phenomenon, ask how they could learn more about it, imagine a method, try it out, and learn from what went wrong as well as from what went as expected.

The systematic collection of portfolios for grading would provide access to the work students thought was their best and would be a way to gather a sample without relying on volunteers. To select twenty-five portfolios (just under 2 percent of English 101 students, about 5 percent of those in English 102 that semester) randomly from each course, one of us would visit each collaborative grading group before the portfolios had been read and pull any five from the unsorted pile in the middle of the table. This tactic helped to make clear that our aim was to look at the program as a whole, rather than to monitor individual teachers. The samples were quickly copied and the originals returned to the grading groups within an hour.

The next problem was to decide which parts of each portfolio to examine. The portfolios from 101 included two revised essays and a piece written entirely in class, while those from 102 had an essay incorporating information from one or more outside texts, a more extensively researched essay, and a

piece written entirely in class. The in-class pieces were included in the portfolio requirements to satisfy concerns about authenticity. Previously, the program emphasized in-class writing and there was controversy over the validity of in-class work as representative of student capabilities. So, the design team decided to make the in-class piece one of the objects of analysis, reasoning that this might help us to better understand the differences between impromptu and revised student writing. We decided to take as the other sample whichever piece the writer identified in his or her cover letter as the best one, or, finding no such choice, to take the one with the most recent date.

We prepared analytic rating forms that essentially separated the course objectives into acts we supposed the essays would reflect and asked readers to rate each act on a scale of five points. Because we knew that some of the pieces, especially those written in class, would not reflect all the categories, we included 0 in the rating scale to indicate non-applicability. The statistically savvy reader already sees problems with that decision, which will be discussed later. We provided space for amplifying comments and, in a hotly argued decision, asked readers to assign each essay a grade after reading it in this way. Our hunch was that readers would regard these essays differently after this analysis than they did in the more holistic context of grading, and we wanted to see how that might look. We decided to have three readers rate each portfolio although we were not sure whether by doing so we would establish some reliability in rating the products or give ourselves an opportunity to observe the differences among readers.

The First Reading: Spring 1997

We recruited fifteen readers, choosing senior teachers who could be expected to read with care and reflect on what they saw in the portfolios. We were looking, not just for readers, but for people who would form the core of an ongoing discussion among the staff. When we gathered to read, half of the readers were assigned to English 101 papers and half to English 102 according to their most recent teaching assignments. We briefly outlined procedures, and then read a sample essay to establish some agreement about how we would use the rating sheet. We immediately saw considerable divergence in readers' application of the categories, particularly concerning the quality and clarity of the writer's thesis and the use of source texts. The ensuing discussion revealed some strong party affiliations, i.e., "I would never give a passing mark to someone who proposes this kind of argument." I offered some thoughts on how I interpreted the categories, but having decided to use this reading as a time to see what staff members would do with this exercise, we did not try to force consensus. This divergence, we thought, might become one of our discoveries.

Busy with administrative duties, I did not read that day, but left the reading in the hands of my collaborators. We did not conduct a de-briefing or wrap-up session, but let readers leave when they had completed their readings. As

the readers, one and two at a time, dropped by my office to talk about what they had read, I realized that we had missed a rich opportunity. The readers had been deeply affected by the day's work. Almost all of them thought the student writing looked very weak when read in this way, and they were troubled by the divergence among reader ratings. The new semester was about to begin, and they were thinking hard about how to teach in light of this reading experience.

The task of examining data from the reading proved quite daunting. We established a simple database that provided tables and graphs showing the range of ratings on each item, the average rating on each category, and the relation between ratings and course grades. The essays from 101 were rated highest on the "conventions" items and lowest on items concerning how effectively the writer uses another writer's text. On average, the revised essays were rated about a half point higher than those written in class. But inspection of the tables suggested a partial explanation for these low ratings: some of the essays, particularly the in-class impromptu writing, were personal essays not based on work with another writer's text, and in those instances, as we had asked them to do, readers had assigned a 0. This lowered the item rating, indicating poor performance, where we needed simply to indicate difference. Of course, the averages obscured important differences among readers. For example, Essay 1, the revised essay in Portfolio 001, was rated 5 by all three readers on the quality of its thesis and support and 4 on its organization and development. But it was a personal essay that made little or no reference to outside texts. Thus two readers rated it 0 on both item 1, which dealt with the writer's response to another writer's text and item 4, which asked how well the writer used summarized material from another writer's text. The third decided that a brief quotation from a pamphlet "gave the essay its focus" and went on to rate the essay a 4 on item 1 and a 5 on item 4. In their comments, all three readers called this essay "wonderful," but in the tables and graphs, it looks like a weak performance rather than a performance defined by a different approach.

The assessment readers' letter grades were in most cases lower than those the students earned in the course: twenty percent were the same or higher, twenty percent were less than one letter grade lower, twenty percent were one letter grade lower, and forty percent were more than one letter grade lower. Six students who passed 101 received failing grades from the assessment readers. Of course the full-semester grades take into account a wider range of the student's performances and may more accurately reflect the student's full capability. But this finding troubled us, and we resolved to try to understand it better.

On average, the 102 essays received somewhat higher ratings than did those from 101, mostly in the 2.5–3.5 range, compared to 1.5–2.5 for 101. The profile of ratings was similar to that for 101, with item 4, concerning how effectively the writer analyzed another writer's text, the lowest at 2.5. Average ratings on the "conventions" items were similar for both courses, between 3.0 and 3.5. As in 101, the ratings were higher for the revised essay than for that done in

class. The 0 rating also was a confounding factor, although it was a smaller one because fewer of the 102 essays were based solely on personal knowledge. The averaging obscured potentially important differences between readers.

Inter-reader differences of more than one point were more prevalent than in the 101 reading, occurring in 174 of a possible 650 instances on the thirteen core items and fourteen times on the "give a grade" item. The grades assigned by readers were slightly closer to the students' final course grades than was the case for 101: 24 percent were the same or higher, 44 percent less than one letter grade lower, 16 percent one grade lower, and 16 percent more than one grade lower.

Clearly these preliminary results raise more questions than they answer, and additional analysis will be useful, particularly in looking at the divergences between readers. Additional analysis has been hampered by an unfortunate original choice of software which, coupled with our design errors, limited our ability to manipulate the data. At the very least, we saw that we would need a more sophisticated statistical approach.

But what we observed so far was useful in launching the next stages of the project. In April we met with the January readers to report preliminary observations and to think about the next reading. Our report confirmed what they had intuited, that they were reading the essays more critically in the assessment than they had read in grading, and they thought the analytic character of the reading was partly responsible, causing them to weigh the qualities of the essays carefully rather than merely looking for a vaguely defined competence. They thought the in-class essay was not a very good sample for assessing outcomes because most of those pieces were not full-scale essays meant to make an argument. Instead, they were personal narratives or informal responses that, by definition, would not match up well with the categories of the assessment. In talking with colleagues since the reading, they had learned that most staff members regarded the in-class essay as an antiquated practice and had students write in class only to generate ideas or otherwise get started on work that would be revised. It appeared that the substantive basis for considering this kind of writing as part of the portfolio had largely evaporated.

The readers thought the analysis form offered more rating levels (1–5) than were useful, especially for the "conventions" categories, causing them to waver over exactly how to distinguish a "strong" performance from an "excellent" one. They argued for developing a rating method that would weigh the more substantive characteristics of the essays more heavily than the conventional ones and would yield an overall score for each essay. They suggested that this would facilitate the kind of analytic comparisons we wanted to make. Further, they thought it would be more useful to read less in each portfolio and have more opportunities to compare their analyses. They proposed that for the next reading we look at only one revised essay in each portfolio, that we assign more readers to each reading, and that instead of splitting the group between 101 and 102, we split the reading so everyone would read work from both courses.

What I heard in that conversation was a general sharpening of perceptions. The readers saw themselves as taking part in the study and were asking the researcher's question: How can we get this phenomenon in focus so we can examine it? The discourse about student work was audibly moving from general claims about work that is "passing" or "not passing" toward more specific observations about what makes a given piece of writing satisfying or problematic.

The Second Reading: Summer and Fall, 1997

Based on our preliminary observations we decided, for the time being, to focus more on readers' views and less on the range of students' work. We had begun by asking, "If we're teaching X, how much X will we find in this work?" Now we asked, "How much do we agree on what X looks like in student work?" We revamped the rating forms, reducing the number of rating levels from 5 to 4 and scaling the rating on conventions back to three levels described in terms of the frequency with which the writer observed the desired convention. On both forms we merged items which dealt with the writer's response to and interpretation of another text, as readers had told us that these moves were too closely related to sort out.

In May, we selected portfolios as we had in December. But in each portfolio, we selected the essay signified as "best" by cover letter, date, or placement. In June, we reassembled our reading team, replacing two people who had left. I joined the reading this time, and we did it during two afternoons, all of us reading the 101 essays on the first day and the 102 essays on the second day. With only one essay to read in each portfolio, we were able to have six readers rate each essay and thus, we hoped, could study their agreements and divergences more carefully. Having heard from the readers that some of the divergence of ratings in the first reading could have resulted from uncertainty about how to apply the categories rather than from real differences in evaluation, we spent almost an hour rating and discussing a sample before beginning each session. Most importantly, this time we talked at the end of each reading session, asking the readers to note what they saw that suggested students were doing well, what worried them, and what was problematic about that day's reading.

They reported being much more comfortable about their ratings than they were in January, and they thought that not having to adjust their expectations from revised to unrevised work and back again helped them to rate more consistently. By rating work from both courses, they developed a clearer sense of the range of possibilities and of the general rate of student progress. They thought the work from both courses was easier to read and more in line with the course objectives than the essays from January.

What the readers found most problematic in the June reading was that about half of the 102 essays they rated were the products of some kind of research project and, instead of the text-based argumentative essays that are typi-

cal in 102, were more in the nature of reports or even annotated bibliographies. Although some of this work was strong in its own terms, much of it was diffuse and somewhat mechanical "research paper" writing, lacking a significant argument or critical edge. Not only was it difficult to place on our rating scale in terms of the course objectives, it made us think we should investigate further how staff members were approaching the task of introducing students to library research.

Preliminary examination of the ratings data from the June 1997 reading suggests that we have corrected some of the earlier problems. The divergence among readers appears narrower and less frequent, and apparently we have not introduced a new glitch equivalent to the 0 for Not Applicable. At this point, we think we have a method that will support more extensive analysis and perhaps some inferences about student outcomes. The analytic reading has become an accepted part of the program, and we now understand our own beliefs and practices well enough to begin what we see as the next stage—talking with faculty in other disciplines about student writing.

What We Have Learned and Where We Are Headed

It's at this point that the commitment to study our practices blends into the commitment to change them. Even while we are still learning how to gather and examine data on student performance, the project has pointed the way to some important changes.

In the first reading, we saw evidence that argued against requiring students to include unrevised impromptu writing in a portfolio meant to represent their full capability as academic writers. We carried that observation out of the research process and into the administrative one, asking how else we could satisfy concerns about the authenticity of student work. This led us to consider the relative values of certainty and trust, and then to eliminate the in-class impromptu writing. If instructors are teaching composing processes, we reasoned, they will see every student's work in multiple drafts. If the instructor is satisfied that work is authentic, there's no reason for the program to doubt. Instead of submitting hasty and unsatisfactory in-class work to show how a student "really" writes, the student has reason to take pride in making the two items in her portfolio as fine as they can possibly be.

Furthermore, the first reading made clear that many students were completing 101 without having written papers that required them to engage with texts other than their own experience. This seemed to arise partly from the textbook then in use, and partly from instructors' convictions about the importance of validating students' experience as a legitimate part of knowledge. Because we were in the process of editing a new textbook for 101 that was designed to bring students quickly into contact with the concerns and meth-

ods of academic writers at this university, we realized that some members of the teaching staff would need extra help and support in the transition. This realization influenced the apparatus of the textbook, the teacher's manual, and the August orientation sessions, in which we explored how teachers can help students build on their personal knowledge in sequences of reading and writing that engage with academic concerns.

In the second reading, we were troubled by the character of the "research papers." Research papers are often demanded as proof that students have been shown the library and taught to find and evaluate sources. But too often, this exercise amounts to copying a pile of material, offering a weak generalization as a controlling idea, and mining the sources for "quotes." Although we encouraged staff members to integrate the necessary introduction to research tactics with other writing assignments, and although some staff members reported great success with what they were calling an "independent study project," these papers, appearing in a randomly chosen sample of 102 portfolios, made it clear that we were, if anything, going backward on that issue. One of the readers embarked on a serious effort at integration during Fall 1997, and in 1998 we are refining and expanding his model.

These changes will complicate the research process; it's hard to compare instances of something that's continually changing. But each semester we make an occasion to carefully, systematically, and reflectively examine what our students are producing. We see openings for productive change that it would be wrong to ignore for the sake of a stable sample.

In January 1998, we read portfolios from Fall 1997. These are the first portfolios written by 101 students using our new textbook with its more rigorous demands, and the first of students taught by the new Teaching Assistants who joined us last August. We have a few new readers and some old ones. We talked at length about a sample student essay at the beginning and debriefed at the end. We thought the 101 efforts were strong, improved over both of last year's groups. We found the 102 samples dishearteningly weak and wondered what factors might contribute to that. How does the make-up of the Fall semester 102 population affect this? Were the essays so poorly edited because we ask 102 students to submit three revised essays? Should we consider slowing the pace of work to improve its quality?

Later this year, we'll be in a position to analyze the data thoroughly, cobble together some rough comparisons of what we see this year with what we saw last, carry our method of examining student writing and talking about what we see to the rest of our staff and to other faculty, maybe even offer some cautious reports to administrators and the world at large. But we've already put into practice a method that will facilitate continuing efforts to improve our practice, we have begun a conversation about teaching composing that replaces generalities and conventional wisdom with concrete and specific terms and expectations for performance, and we've learned together how to ask what a program is accomplishing and to devise ways to discover some of the answers.

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5

The Contributions of Sociolinguistic Profiling and Constituents' Expectations to Writing Program Evaluation

Mark Schaub

A recent trend in higher education has been to view university students—along with faculty, administrators, and employers—as "stakeholders" with vested interests in their educational programs; that is, as constituents of their institutions and their curricula. For WPAs, this has meant changes in the ways we assess and develop our programs, their curricula, and their faculties. WPAs are well aware of how the expectations and needs of the various stakeholder groups often change, or how their expectations and needs conflict with those of other stakeholder groups. What may be best for the students may not be best for the faculty, just as what may be most efficient for the university administration is not always in the interest of the students or faculty.

Nonnative speakers of English represent one growing stakeholder group whose interests WPAs must consider, in addition to the needs of many other constituents. We must seek ways to manage these needs and expectations so that we can better assess the effectiveness of our programs and improve them.

In spite of the array of journals and books that address second language writing and the numerous discussions of composition program evaluation and analysis, there is little attention paid to interaction among the sociolinguistic contexts of writing programs. Likewise, little or no published scholarship exists on the different ways that a writing program can be seen within its unique setting and context, particularly the ways in which the program meets the needs of its specific local constituents, most notably among them the writing students themselves.

This chapter describes sociolinguistic profiling, a methodology which WPAs can use for analyzing a writing program—specifically, for analyzing the ways in which their program curriculum and instruction responds to or negotiates the various expectations of primary constituents within its particular university. The setting for my particular study is the Freshman Writing Pro-

gram[1] at the American University in Cairo (AUC) where I taught for three years prior to becoming the director of the program. This setting may seem exotic, but the methodology can be usefully applied to a multitude of writing programs within North America and elsewhere.

While there have been numerous published evaluations and descriptions of college-level composition programs (Neel 1978; Witte and Faigley 1983; Chandler 1985; White 1989), none have fully considered in detail how the respective programs are suited for a particular linguistic setting, but have assumed uniform, native English-speaking contexts. This is an assumption that many WPAs can no longer make.

Because each writing program is unique, a detailed analysis of the sociolinguistics of the institutional setting can contribute to curriculum development and program evaluation. In light of contemporary understandings of academic writing within the contexts of university communities, it is important that this particular social context for composition instruction be analyzed if any useful conclusions are to be drawn about the nature and/or effectiveness of that program. Barton reminds us that "People's literacy practices are situated in broader social relations. This makes it necessary to describe the social setting of literacy events, including the ways in which social institutions support particular literacies" (1994, 41). For example, a WPA should be able to determine if the kinds of literacies that students are being taught in the writing program meet the literacy-related expectations and needs of the program's constituents. To do so, these needs and expectations must be identified in the first place. Using sociolinguistic profiling methodologies, the research described here provides details and history of the forms and functions of the English language in the writing program's host country, Egypt, and examines the sociolinguistics of English for AUC undergraduate students enrolled in the writing program.

This project made use of qualitative and survey data to determine:

- The sociolinguistic profile for the program and its institutional setting.
- The needs of the students and the purpose for the writing program, as perceived by its primary constituents in the institution: the students themselves, those who teach in the program, the university's administration, and other faculty at the university.
- The ways in which the program and its curriculum negotiate these various expectations of the program's constituents.

Data for this project was collected from May 1996 to January 1997. I distributed the survey instruments for this research project in May and September of 1996, after beginning as Director of the Program in January 1996. I hoped that this research would help me to do my job as director of the Freshman Writing Program and to help my colleagues (both faculty and administrators) better do theirs. I believed that it would be useful for all of us to know how the writing program's curriculum negotiated its social and linguistic and

institutional contexts here in Egypt's largest city. Just what are the institutional and social contexts for a writing program in Cairo, and how might those differ from other English-language writing programs, such as those many of us have been involved with in North America? I hoped that my project eventually could lead into a form of program evaluation that would yield richer information than a quantitative or pretest/posttest method could.

Rationale and Research Design

General Rationale for the Project

The project's design draws heavily from curriculum theory, particularly second-language curriculum design. Student needs and expectations, as well as linguistic context, are a central concern. Any discussion of student expectations for the curriculum had to be related to an evaluation of whether the curriculum is serving the primary constituents (the students) for whom it was created and the program's secondary constituents within the university community (those who teach in the writing program, other faculty at the university, and university administrators). My intention was not to quantifiably measure the writing program's effectiveness in reaching its stated goals, but to report to the program's students whether their program is teaching them the kinds of writing skills they believe were being taught. My intention also was to determine how well this curriculum matched the kinds of writing they felt they *should have* been prepared for. One particular area of focus involved the language in which the students are learning to write better: English.

Not only was it important that this project attempt to reveal the attitudes and expectations of those teaching in the program, but it was also imperative that it move toward answering—for the university's administration—whether the program was doing what administrators believed it is funded to do. These university officials also needed to know what linguistic or other constraints were acting upon the writing program in its pursuit of its goals.

Like many other writing programs around the world, including those in North America, the Freshman Writing Program (FWP) is situated within a unique sociolinguistic setting. The particular setting of the FWP happens to be within an institution (The American University in Cairo) which has a primary or first language that is different from the primary or native language of the city or country in which it exists. The native language for the overwhelming majority of the student body enrolled in the two courses in the FWP is colloquial Egyptian Arabic.

Methodology for Sociolinguistic Profiling

Studies by Kachru (1983), Berns (1988, 1990), Petzold (1994) and others detail the extent of English use in various functions, as well as forms of English in various countries. Even so, there are relatively few models or frameworks

that can be used to map the spread of English and its particular functions within specific regions, such as Egypt or the Middle East.

The most useful division of language functions within given linguistic situations comes from Kachru's study of nonnative Englishes (1981), later adopted by Berns (1990) in her surveys of the profile of English in Japan, India, and Germany. Kachru and Berns use four categories of function to examine English use in particular countries: the *regulative function,* which describes language use in governmental, legal, and administrative contexts; the *instrumental function*, which describes language use within educational institutions and business transactions; the *interpersonal function,* which describes language use in family situations and religious or other social groups; and the *imaginative/innovative function*, which involves creative and literary uses of language, such as advertising puns and jingles, or formal literature like drama, novels, and poetry. These four functions were used in this study to help explain the uses of English in the Arab Republic of Egypt. The conclusions from this sociolinguistic analysis of forms and functions are summarized in the "Conclusions" section at the end of this chapter.

Case Study Methodology for the Project

Cook and Shadish (1986), Guba (1987), and Hilgers and Marsella (1992) stress the importance of gauging the needs and perspectives of a program's "stakeholders" if there is to be a thorough evaluation of that program as an educational entity. While White (1989, 1995) recommends expert "outside" evaluator/consultants as an effective and less biased way to survey the various stakeholders, there remain many reasons for a WPA or other program "insider" to lead this research for program evaluation. For one thing, it is the kind of work that WPAs are expected to do and expect to do. Additionally, there is an increasing recognition that those in an "insider" position are often the best researchers in terms of analyzing their programmatic or work environment. McKernan (1991) follows up on the reflective practitioner models of Donald Schön (1983) and makes a call for more educational-based action research by "reflective teaching professionals" who have the capacity "for self-evaluation and self-improvement through rigorous and systematic research and study of [their] practice" (McKernan 1991, 47).

As Strenski notes, ". . . any writing program is an unstable, dynamic force-field full of conflict and opportunity whose agents are working out very different game plans" (1995, 82–83). The ways in which these game plans can be detected and described are what I call "sites of negotiation" in a writing program, the places in which negotiation can be observed between competing and often conflicting culture-related expectations within the curriculum of the FWP. This case study attempts an analysis of a writing program through the various "lenses" or perspectives that Hilgers and Marsella implore program evaluators to look through (1992, 14–15). Yet this study is even more inter-

ested in the ways in which these perspectives lead to conflict or require adjustments in light of the other perspectives, how they are negotiated by and within the "contact zone" itself.

One reason for my choice of a qualitative study is my own position within the program I am studying. Bullock (1987) argues that analysis of the writing program in which one works is legitimate and necessary scholarly research that WPAs need to do. Although I could be called what Guba and Lincoln (1982) term "the evaluator as instrument," where I was "at one and the same time instrument administrator, data collector, analyst, and data interpreter," I could also enjoy some of the benefits of my role as both researcher and WPA. My position in the writing program as WPA provided me easy access to administrators, other AUC faculty, students, and writing program instructors. Not only did my occupation of the same home grounds as the study's subject allow for direct access to the program's constituency, my location as qualitative investigator of our shared context at times caused the study's participants to expect my inquiry as a normal part of my job as WPA.

Data Collection

My study involved triangulation in data collection, as is shown in Table 5–1. In order to aid recording, analyzing, and reporting the data, I developed a case database, which includes the typed transcripts of interviews, detailed reports of responses to survey questions, and copies of the documents I analyzed.

Classroom observations and student text analysis are also features of thorough investigations about what is actually going on in the classroom (see Goodlad 1979; White 1989), but that data collection and analysis could have been a research project in itself. My design did not include these strategies because my focus was on the overall context for instruction in the writing program and the needs/expectations of its stakeholders, rather than the actual nature of day-to-day instruction in the program's classrooms.

Table 5–1. Strategies for Data Collection

Subjects/ Participants	Survey Instruments	Document Analysis	Personal Interviews
FWP students	X		X
FWP faculty	X		X
Administrators		X	X
AUC faculty	X	X	

Survey Instruments

The first stage in data collection involved surveys of three different constituent populations of the writing program: the students enrolled in the program, the thirty instructors within the FWP, and faculty in other departments at the University who are likely to require student writing in their courses.

Consistent with principles of survey methodology, two of the surveys were pilot-tested before implementation. The FWP student survey instrument was given to two sections of students enrolled in English 112, the first course in our composition sequence, at the beginning of the Spring 1996 semester, in order to fine-tune the questions for the full survey at the beginning of the Fall 1996 semester. The AUC faculty survey instrument was given to four AUC faculty members in order to gauge the responses, and informal interviews were used to revise the wording of several of the questions. Because the FWP faculty survey was eleven pages long, and because follow-up interviews were planned, no pilot-test was undertaken with that instrument.

Because I was interested in student expectations for the courses, in relation to their particular needs, the survey of student needs/expectations was conducted during the first or second class meetings of ENG 112.[2] Besides seeking information on student expectations for ENG 112, the first student survey solicited information necessary for completing the sociolinguistic profile of English and English writing among AUC students; thus, questions were included pertaining to students' language abilities and language usage in certain communicative situations.[3]

The survey[4] of the FWP instructors was distributed to all thirty-one FWP instructors. This survey was distributed during the Spring 1996 semester, so that instructors new to the FWP the previous Fall term had some experience in the department and had likely tailored their expectations of the program to their teaching experience in AUC.

After a pilot test, the survey instrument for non-FWP faculty was distributed for the Fall 1996 term. The survey focused only on the full-time instructors, excluding those who were new to AUC in Fall, 1996 and those who are library staff or taught in the English Language Institute. (Both groups are included in AUC figures as full-time "faculty," but neither group actually teaches courses to the students during or after their enrollment in ENG 112 or ENG 113.) The target population also excludes the full-time faculty in the Freshman Writing Program because they are the target population of the second survey. Because many of the part-time faculty members are difficult to contact, and also because many of these part-timers teach full-time at other universities in the Cairo area (which might affect their expectations related to student writing at AUC), the part-time faculty were not included in the population. Of this population of 155, 69 faculty actually completed and returned the questionnaire, close to one-third of them after receiving follow-up memos. Those faculty who did not respond to the initial survey request or to follow-up memos were not contacted again.

Analysis of Documents

As part of the overall collection of data, I gathered program and university documents in order to determine some of the institutional and departmental expectations of FWP's curriculum within its unique setting. Documents included university catalogs, course descriptions, reports about English and writing abilities of undergraduates, and the 1998 re-accreditation report. I also investigated course syllabi, essay test prompts, written assignments, new instructor orientation materials, and other FWP data, in order to locate FWP personnel's programmatic expectations for their own teaching.

Interviews

During the summer term of 1996, I interviewed the Dean and the Department Chair who represented the institutional chain of command/power above the FWP and its WPA. Within the FWP, I interviewed the Assistant Director and four other FWP instructors, as a follow-up to the FWP faculty surveys. Each of these interviews was taperecorded and transcribed.

Additionally, I randomly selected ten students nearing the end of their semesters in ENG 113 (in Spring 1997) and asked them to participate in interviews about their experiences in the composition courses.

Data Analysis

Once the sociolinguistic profile of English—specifically, *writing* in English—had been formulated within the AUC institutional setting (see "Conclusions" at the end of this chapter), I began to sort and code the data from the surveys, interviews, observations, and documents. The analysis focused on the nature, the frequency, and varieties of the sites of negotiation by the FWP curriculum, and how the program negotiated the expectations placed on it by its uniquely situated constituency. To assist with the data analysis, I considered several sets of categories available for sorting methods of writing instruction, including those suggested in Donovan and McClelland (1980), White and Polin (1984), and Hillocks (1986). In the end, I chose a unique combination of the Goodlad (1979) taxonomy, which is especially suited to analyzing curricula; and the Vähäpassi (Gorman, Purves, and Degenhart, 1988) taxonomy, which is especially suited to categorizing composition situations internationally.

I organized my detailed descriptions in the overall data analysis within the institutional linguistic context of the writing program by separating the process into three of the curricular domains used by Goodlad (1979): the *formal* domain (the officially acknowledged and published version of what is being taught and how), the *instructional* domain, or "perceived" domain (what the teachers see as the curriculum), and the *experiential* domain (the curriculum

Table 5–2. Grid for Analyzing Data (Description of Curriculum)

Domain	Intention/ Purpose	Primary Content	Cognitive Processing	Primary Audience
Formal				
Instructional				
Experiential				
Secondary				

Table 5–3. Grid for Analyzing Data (Description of Constituents' Expectations)

FWP Constituent Group	Intention/ Purpose	Primary Content	Cognitive Processing	Primary Audience
Administration				
FWP faculty				
FWP students				
Other AUC faculty				

that students perceive). These domain/categories were used to describe the present curriculum and instruction within the FWP, from the perspectives of stakeholders. I did not try to construct the fourth domain described by Goodlad, the *operational* domain (what is actually being taught, and how it is being taught), because that sort of construction relies on the other three perceptions anyway, and requires extensive class observations and student text analysis. Instead of using the operational domain category, I devised a new one, the *secondary* domain. It described the writing program instruction from the point of view of those who deal with the program students' academic writing beyond the scope of ENG 112 or 113: the other AUC faculty members. Thus, the *secondary* domain refers to what and how FWP students are taught as perceived by those faculty who encounter academic writing by students while or after these students have taken ENG 112 or 113.

Within each domain, I analyzed the data for the four elements of writing instruction, adapted from Vähäpassi (Gorman, Purves, and Degenhart 1988, 22). This strategy is represented in Table 5–2. Not only does this categorizing system address four of the major variables in approaches to composition in-

struction, but it also was designed for an international study of student writing across cultures and linguistic communities.

The data in Table 5–2 are then compared to the various expectations of the writing program's constituents, which is represented in a similar grid in Table 5–3. The same four categories for composition instruction (from Vähäpassi 1988) are used. In making this comparison, there may be clearly definable gaps or matches between the expectations, by a particular group, of what the FWP *should* be doing as far as teaching students effective English writing at AUC in Egypt and their perceptions of what it *actually is* doing in that effort.

While this comparison revealed interesting areas of dissonance, where expectations and perceptions of reality didn't meet, the comparison was a secondary focus of my analysis. My main focus was to locate and describe the areas of dissonance or contrast between the expectations of the various stakeholder groups of the FWP, as well as to locate and describe how the program's curriculum and instruction adapt to or ignore these contrasts. In this analysis, I asked three central kinds of questions about the specific expectations each group has for the composition program:

1. What causes of student writing problems have been identified?
2. What are the stated purposes of composition instruction?
3. What view of language learning and composition instruction is assumed or espoused?

These sets of questions were adapted from Davis, Scriven, and Thomas (1987, 53) and could account for the instructional and theoretical differences among the FWP faculty. The first question relates to the exigency for the FWP in the first place: why it should continue as a program worthy of being funded. The second question relates to the approaches to composition emphasized in the FWP, and the third question involves the methodologies for teaching writing that are or should be emphasized in the FWP courses. As is fitting for a case study of a complex subject like a writing program, these questions elicited and allowed for a multitude of answers. For example, for question number two, each constituent group's expectations for what *should* be emphasized in the program are countered against one another, as well as against their perceptions of what is *actually* being emphasized in the classroom. This process is how each "site of negotiation" was located, described, and analyzed.

Conclusions

Conclusions from the Sociolinguistic Profiling

The history of English in Egypt is a rich one, and English continues to be used in more and more domains, forms, and functions in contemporary Cairo. In spite of the complexity of these situations for English use and the large numbers of Egyptians who have learned or are learning some English, English re-

mains a foreign language for the vast majority of Egyptians and Cairenes. In several subgroups and in numerous specific communities—including the American University in Cairo—English is so central and dominant that the EFL label does not apply. For the AUC undergraduate student community, English is an additional or "associate" language, a language in which students have achieved relatively high levels of competence in speaking, reading, and writing. In rating their own writing abilities in English and their native language Arabic, most first-year composition students view their writing skills in their second language as being equal to or better than their first-language writing skills.

The Writing Program's "Sites" of Negotiation

The most significant sites of negotiation for the Freshman Writing Program at the American University in Cairo are the points at which the curricula and instruction of the program deal with varying expectations regarding the following:

Conversational, Listening, and Presentation Skills in English

Within a sociolinguistic setting in which students have become proficient in English over the course of many years of education in foreign language schools, the students' expectations for composition parallel the emphasis of most of their English courses: little writing, lots of conversation and discussion as part of class time. Additionally, university faculty outside the English department often expect that oral communication skills receive some emphasis in the program's courses. However, the writing program faculty, hold contrasting expectations, based on their view that oral communication skills are not an emphasis in their courses. Few, if any, assignments are given with oral communication in mind, and oral English skills are not a significant element in evaluation of the students. In spite of these contrasting expectations, oral communication skills are in fact fostered in classroom practices—albeit as an informal, secondary outcome.

Grammar and Stylistic Conventions for Academic Writing

As is the case with so many writing programs, the FWP's composition courses are seen by other faculty at the institution as courses in which major emphasis is applied, or should be applied, to the student's competence in sentence construction, punctuation, and other language use issues. Students hold similar expectations, though perhaps not to the extent that non-English department faculty do. However, writing program faculty predictably see grammar and punctuation instruction as secondary concerns, and the official curricula for the courses reflect this view. In practice, much instructor and student time (especially outside the classroom) is spent focusing on specific grammatical or mechanical problems in language use. The sociolinguistic context for the program and the university is largely the cause of this obsession with grammar by composition students and faculty.

The Writing Program as a Gate to the University, Its Majors, and the Core/ General Education Curriculum

As with the first two sites of negotiation, there is once again a contrast in the expectations for the Freshman Writing Program held by various constituencies regarding whether the program is responsible for "weeding out" or "holding back" students whose writing and writing-related skills are not solid enough that they may enroll in their major areas or continue through the Required Core curriculum. There also are contrasting beliefs about whether the students passing ENG 112/113 write at a satisfactory level.

Overall, the Writing Program's students believe that the two composition courses are preparing them to write well enough to succeed in the University, and that passing both courses certifies this level of proficiency. Likewise, the Writing Program faculty by and large believe that the writing abilities of passing students are adequate. Yet among the other AUC faculty, and to a degree within the administration, there is some ambivalence about the overall level of undergraduate writing in English.

The situation of many upper-level faculty across the University complaining about the lack of preparedness of their students is certainly not unique to AUC; such complaints have been documented by many other WPAs. Because of the sociolinguistic situation at AUC—where nonnative speakers of English teach or study in English rather than the primary language of their own country, within their own country—there was no discernible difference in the assessment of overall undergraduate writing ability between faculty for whom English is a native language and those who use English as a second language.

Despite the ambivalence about student writing abilities among the University faculty, a significant number of these professors feel that the Freshman Writing Program is not performing a gatekeeping function well enough. However, the curriculum and instruction within the Writing Program negotiates between those negative expectations on one hand, and those of the students and the Writing Program faculty on the other. This negotiation takes place primarily in the most politically permeated element of most writing programs: grading and assessment.

The sites for negotiation for the Freshman Writing Program at the American University in Cairo may be unique to the sociolinguistic context of that institution, yet the methods for describing and analyzing the sociolinguistic setting for a writing program can be duplicated anywhere. Likewise, the methods for locating the "sites of negotiation" for a writing program's curriculum and instructional practice also can be useful for WPAs everywhere, as they seek alternative ways to understand and evaluate their programs.

Notes

1. The Freshman Writing Program, comprised of thirty-one full-time faculty in the Spring of 1996, is responsible for the instruction of two first-year composition courses required of all undergraduates: English 112 and English 113. Both courses meet nine

hours per week (five days per week) and are pass/fail courses with mid-term and final grades determined by portfolio assessment within faculty committees. English 112 is primarily an expository writing course that introduces students to academic research, library skills, and documentation. English 113 is a research writing course, with a sequence of related papers required of each student.

2. ENG 113 students were not surveyed because they already have had experiences in the FWP, which had shaped their expectations.

3. See the author's website (http://www.sas.auc.eun.eg/acs/mschaub) for the FWP survey instruments.

4. Instrument design was influenced by Witte, Meyer, and Miller (1982), White and Polin (1984), and Ford (1986).

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6

After the Practicum

Assessing Teacher Preparation Programs

Sarah Liggett

One kind of research that writing program administrators (WPAs) regularly conduct is assessment in its various modes. Although sometimes assessment is mandated by others, as in an accreditation review, at other times assessment is a personal decision made by a WPA to evaluate performance with a particular class or to judge achievements in a specific administrative role. It is such assessment of our work as trainers and mentors of teachers, particularly our teaching practica, that I want to discuss here. Some assessments of our practica for preparing teachers are made routinely: we grade the work of the graduate teaching assistants (GTAs) enrolled in our courses, and they give us feedback through course evaluations. Additionally, we may study student evaluation of GTAs' performance to measure indirectly the success of our practica. Such assessments are standard procedures at the end of a semester. However, two pieces of professional literature recently led me to conduct the research described in this chapter.

Elizabeth Rankin's *Seeing Yourself as a Teacher: Conversations with Five New Teachers in a University Writing Program* (1994) is a case study based on dialogue with new instructors one year after they have taken a practicum in the fall and a "Seminar on Teaching College English" in the spring. Her insights concerning the boundaries new teachers struggle to draw between the personal and the professional, their attempts to integrate theory with practice, their doubts about claiming authority—suffering from what she labels the "imposter syndrome"—served two purposes. First, her conclusions led me to reflect on my own early years as a teacher, and second, they led me to wonder to what extent the GTAs in my practicum shared similar experiences with those in Rankin's study. Rankin says that what surprised her most was GTAs' "resistance to the role of the teacher" (1994, 128). This reaction was not one I recalled from my early years in the classroom nor sensed in the teachers who took my practicum. Was I overlooking something?

Catherine Latterell's (1996) survey of how teaching assistants are trained in writing programs across the country also made me think seriously about my practicum. Latterell reports that the predominant model for introducing GTAs to the profession is a teaching practicum. Yet she warns in her *WPA* article, "Training the Workforce: An Overview of GTA Education Curricula," that such instruction may be doing GTAs and our profession a disservice. She claims that skills-based practica may rely "on translation-based approaches to theory and writing instruction and on one-way modes of communication: GTA educator to GTAs, GTAs to first-year students" (1996, 19). She raises the following concern about this pedagogical model:

> [T]he emphasis on skills training in the majority of GTA education programs may encourage a perception compositionists have long battled: Teaching writing is not valued, even by the rhetoric and composition field. By dispensing "training" in one- or two-hour doses once a week for one (possibly two) terms, this model encourages the passing out of class activities and other quick-fixes—an inoculation method of GTA education. We need to examine the message we are sending GTAs and our other colleagues in English studies by maintaining such practices. (20)

Her strong indictment of skills-based practica led me to question whether such training programs are necessarily devoid of philosophy, theory, and reflective practice. Before abandoning the popular practicum model, I needed to understand better its long-term effects. To do so, I decided to investigate how my practicum influences GTAs once formal training ends.

What follows is a description of my efforts to assess outcomes of the practicum that I have taught for fifteen years in the English Department at Louisiana State University—a three-hour, semester-long seminar for graduate credit held during the GTAs' first semester of teaching first-year English. I do not offer my methods as a template for the assessment of other teacher preparation programs. Rather, I describe my multiple assessment methods here so that other GTA educators can see a range of research they might conduct to gauge the impact of their practica. "The principle of 'multiple sources' is . . . key" to effective evaluation according to the *ADE* Ad Hoc Committee on Assessment. "[N]o single measure or source of evidence is adequate to address the questions assessment poses" (1996, 7).

Posing Questions to Guide Assessment

Although educational assessment practices vary widely depending on what is being evaluated and where, those who have studied the process agree that it should begin with clearly articulated values and goals of the program as reflected in the questions that guide the assessment. Answers to these questions should lead to decision making and improvements in the program assessed. For

example, the American Association for Higher Education (AAHE) lists nine "Principles of Good Practice for Assessing Student Learning." These guidelines stress, among other things, that good assessment "begins with educational values . . . [that] should drive not only w*hat* we choose to assess but also *how* we do so." It "works best when the programs it seeks to improve have clear, explicitly stated purposes" and "makes a difference when it begins with issues of use and illuminates questions that people really care about" (1992, 2–3).

Based on goals for my practicum and shaped in part by my readings of Rankin and Latterell, I posed three questions to guide the assessment of my preparation of new teachers.

1. In what ways does GTAs' teaching change in semesters after they have taken a practicum?
2. When GTAs have problems with teaching, from whom do they seek advice?
3. What impact did/does keeping a teaching journal have on GTAs?

The following sections explain my rationale for asking these questions based on the goals for my practicum, describe my methods of gathering data, and analyze the results. Finally, I will summarize the changes that assessment brought about in my practicum.

In What Ways Does GTAs' Teaching Change in Semesters After They Have Taken a Practicum?

My goal when working with GTAs is not to clone teachers who will replicate my syllabus, pedagogy, and teaching style in their first-year English classes but instead to enable individual teachers to create their own courses and discover their own pedagogies through readings, discussion, reflection, and practice. New teachers are less likely to feel like imposters if they are not striving to be somebody else. By learning how GTAs had changed their approaches to teaching writing once they were no longer enrolled in the practicum, I sought confirmation that GTAs were creating themselves as teachers in their own images.

To learn how their teaching had changed since taking the practicum, I designed a short questionnaire and distributed it to fifty-six GTAs at LSU who completed the course in Fall 1994, 1995, 1996, or 1997. Seventy-six percent responded. I expected all to mention minor changes in course materials—a different reading here, a new assignment there—and they did without exception. During the practicum, they had begun "to make the class [their] own," as one GTA put it. Indeed, the survey showed that since the practicum most GTAs had revised the teaching packets for students that I had provided, adding exercises they had developed and replacing sample essays with some from their own former students. However, what interested me more were more substantive changes in syllabi and pedagogy.

Changes in Syllabi

Two-thirds of the GTAs who were teaching the same course they had taught while enrolled in the practicum revised the sequence of assignments. For instance, one GTA explained, "The narrating and investigating units lacked enough structure and guidelines according to my and students' perceptions. So I combined them and clarified the writing assignment." Well over half of the GTAs changed the rhetorical purposes of one or more writing assignments or revised (or deleted) the collaborative assignment presented in the practicum. One-sixth of the GTAs created a thematic approach to make more explicit for themselves and their students the connections among essay assignments. Other GTAs have joined the service learning initiative on campus, combining the teaching of writing with volunteer work in public schools and other social agencies. Finally, those GTAs who had been assigned to teach argumentative writing, the focus of our second first-year English course, had applied what they learned in the practicum to design syllabi on their own.

Overall, changes in syllabi reflect the GTAs' clearer understanding of the writing course as a whole and a keener awareness of student needs, things more easily grasped after teaching for the first time. Their changes are tentative solutions to problems identified in the previous semester and guided by teaching philosophies they developed during the practicum. That they invest time to work through changes in syllabi, amid their graduate course work and research, indicates to me a strong commitment to effective teaching.

Changes in Pedagogy

Over half of the GTAs reported conferencing more frequently with their writing students, either one-on-one or in small groups as described in *Scenarios for Teaching Writing*, a case book used in the practicum (Anson et al. 1993). While all were still using peer response groups, a practice endorsed in the practicum, some expressed skepticism as did the GTA who decided to "use peer evaluations again to see if there are more benefits to them than I previously thought . . . the students give each other wrong advice." Several GTAs had worked out different approaches to peer response groups. For example, one GTA asked three fellow GTAs to model the peer review process for her students by critiquing a rough draft she had written.

Other changes in pedagogy that GTAs noted in the semesters following the practicum ranged from assigning journals to having students lead discussions on readings. Some reported changes that reflected the expertise they were developing through their graduate studies. For example, one Master's in Fine Arts (M.F.A.) student in screenwriting described how he was using film to teach rhetorical devices. Such changes in teaching reflect an attitude of experimentation—a recognition that there are many ways to teach writing effectively—and sometimes of skepticism—a realization that what may work for some teachers may not work for them.

Although I was pleased to learn ways that GTAs had redesigned their courses, I was eager to understand how the practicum motivated such change. When I asked GTAs to elaborate on "What from the practicum has proved useful in the following semester(s)?" they did not answer with the isolated "class activities and quick-fixes" that Latterell suggests are trademarks of skills-based practica. Instead, they tended to respond in more global terms in one of two ways.

One way is evident in this GTA's explanation: "Having a better general grasp of the various philosophies and pedagogies of composition has proved helpful or at least reassuring to me." Although no GTAs singled out course readings as the most useful part of the practicum (and very few said they continue to read literature in the field), evidently the professional literature of the course (Erika Lindemann's *A Rhetoric for Writing Teachers* [1995] and a packet of articles on rhetorical and composition theories) as well as more pedagogically-oriented texts including *Questioning: A Path to Critical Thinking* (Christenbury and Kelly 1993) and *Scenarios for Teaching Writing* (Anson et al. 1993) helped GTAs understand the *whys* as well as the *hows* of writing pedagogy. It would seem, then, that these readings provide the kind of theoretical base that Latterell recommends: "[G]rounding the teaching strategies shared in a practicum in a broader theoretical framework gives GTAs more tools for thinking about what's happening in their classrooms and for arriving at their own solutions to problems" (20). Such grounding, no doubt, fosters confidence to change. However, I am concerned and disappointed that these GTAs do not continue to read professional literature in composition studies, a point to which I will return.

A second way GTAs summarized the usefulness of the practicum was to talk about the value of the organizational skills I advocated. Throughout the course, I modeled ways to set goals for a semester, to design two- or three-week units, and to create lesson plans for individual classes. In addition, I helped them arrange their teaching journals in ways that clarified connections among practicum work, their first-year composition classes, and their written reflections. It has amazed and troubled me that many GTAs (all of whom have been watching teachers at work for more than sixteen years) come into a practicum thinking that good teaching just happens—or does not. Their responses to my survey suggested that the practicum gives them a clearer sense of how—particularly in a student-centered classroom—the teacher's role as planner and facilitator is critical to effective learning.

How do GTAs manage "on their own" after the practicum? When I conducted a t-test (a statistical test) comparing student evaluations from GTAs' first semester of teaching to those from their second semester, the later scores were significantly higher ($p < .05$). On an average, student evaluations of GTAs rose from 3.03 to 3.32 on a four-point scale that ranks traits such as being prepared for class, presenting material clearly, engaging the students' interest, assigning fair grades, and demonstrating concern. Thus, in answer to the

general question, "In what ways does GTAs' teaching change in semesters after they have taken a practicum?" GTAs proved to be developing as conscientious teachers, quite capable of building upon or replacing the theories and practices of the practicum in order to *improve* their own writing classes.

When GTAs Have Problems with Teaching, from Whom Do They Seek Advice?

By asking GTAs this second question, I sought to trace the supportive network that GTAs build after the practicum. Latterell claims that "GTA education programs that are anchored in [teaching] communities promote ongoing teacher education which extends well beyond a GTA's first term or year of teaching" (21). One principle that Mark Long, Jennifer Holberg, and Marcy Taylor promote for their "collegial model" of professional training is to "develop a responsive and collaborative community of teachers" (1996, 74). Had GTAs learned to rely too much on me through the practicum or had they developed other avenues of help?

When asked "from whom do you seek advice," more than one-third of the GTAs said they keep in touch with their mentors, veteran instructors assigned to advise them during their first semester of teaching and who visited classes and reviewed graded essays. One-fourth seek other experienced instructors, but by far the majority "talk shop" with peers—other GTAs who shared the practicum or those whom they have heard are good teachers. One student noted, "I still go and observe other TAs teach to get ideas and develop my own teaching skills," a carryover from the peer observations required in the practicum. Others sometimes attend departmental in-service workshops or those offered by our Center for Faculty Development. The fewest number of students reported primarily seeking help from me, confirming that their network of support grows widely and quickly after their first semester.

These GTAs view teaching as a communal activity rather than an isolated one. Indeed, one advantage of a practicum offered concurrently with a GTA's first semester of teaching is that it is by nature a community of teachers. What one GTA liked most about the practicum was "the opportunity to meet and talk with other teachers and gain their views, perceptions, and experiences about teaching." Thus, even though a practicum may be offered by an experienced WPA for inexperienced teaching assistants, the "one-way mode of communication" that Latterell warns against soon becomes a network of contacts made through the mentoring program, peer observations, and collaboration in the practicum.

What Impact Did/Does Keeping a Teaching Journal Have on GTAs?

As noted earlier, the most frequent method of evaluation in practica is a teaching portfolio, journal, or notebook. No doubt the requirements of these evaluative tools vary widely. In my practicum, much work goes into teaching

journals—the GTAs labor to put together the thick three-ring binders that amass lesson plans and reflections, annotations on course readings, graded essays, questions, short writing assignments, and bibliographies; and I labor to evaluate their efforts. Sometimes I wondered along with the GTAs, "Is it worth it?" Consequently, the last part of my research investigated the question, "What impact did/does keeping a teaching journal have on GTAs?" In doing so, I followed another AAHE principle: "Assessment requires attention to outcomes but also and equally to the experiences that lead to those outcomes" (2). Evidence from my survey indicated that GTAs were developing into effective teachers, but what role did keeping a teaching journal play in their development?

I investigated this issue by studying three kinds of data: the prefaces that GTAs write to introduce their journals and to reflect upon their first semester of teaching; some open-ended survey questions about the function journals serve after the practicum; and an instrument designed to measure the level of insight GTAs reached in their journals. My findings follow.

Journal Prefaces

I confess that I enjoy hearing GTAs sing praises of their journals in their prefaces. Their entries sometimes testify to almost miraculous conversions, as these two excerpts illustrate:

> I railed silently at first at the time-consuming process [of the journal], but I feel grateful now for the imperative to do what I enjoy and believe in. Very quickly, in fact, I began to look forward to the time for reflection. It was always the first of my school work that I would attend to each day. I saw this writing as a respite from the strict demand of academia, a little piece of me that I still owned. As I examine my journal, I see the faces of my students and the face of my own emerging professionalism.

> From the process [of keeping a teaching journal], I've not only seen my teaching ability evolve, but my writing has changed as well. My screen writing professor called me "a very cautious man" this semester. He didn't mean it as a compliment. Basically, I have a bad tendency to completely hide my thoughts and feelings in my writing. I don't do it intentionally, but my goal this semester has been to put more of me in my work. Thus, the teaching journal has also become a place for me to work on pulling myself out from behind the barriers I hide behind. As an exercise in writing about myself alone, this journal has been invaluable.

These entries attest to GTAs' development as teachers, students, and writers as reflected in their journals. But Glenda Conway's essay "Portfolio Cover Letters, Students' Self-Perceptions, and Teachers' Ethics" (1994), alerts me to ethical problems that such metadiscourse can create in a graded assignment (journals account for 25 percent of the practicum grade). Are students merely telling me what they think I want to hear, pushing "just the right 'buttons'" as

she suggests? "Self-reflection," warns Conway, "calls on students not only to sound mature, but also to make claims indicating that some identifiable part of their present maturity is directly connected to the portfolio process" (1994, 87), or in this case, to the journaling process. Therefore, I asked GTAs to tell me whether and how they use their journals after the practicum. When a grade is no longer at stake, what songs do they sing about their journals?

Survey Responses

Once again, I used a survey. More than 90 percent of the GTAs reported using their teaching journals in a subsequent semester. When asked which sections they consulted, most reported reviewing lesson plans and reflections as well as summative entries on what to do differently next time. A few also referred to annotations of practicum readings or to the readings themselves. Others reported pulling materials they had collected in their journals for new student packets.

Did keeping a journal develop a habit of reflective teaching, a primary purpose for the journal requirement? Three-quarters of those who responded said they continue to keep a journal of some kind after the practicum, especially pairing lesson plans with reflections. That they take time to record reactions to their classes suggests that they continue the systematic reflective practice encouraged in the practicum. But how meaningful are their reflections?

Insight Instrument

The third way I assessed the value of a teaching journal was by applying a measurement instrument developed by Mary Murray (1995) and described in her book *Artwork of the Mind*. Murray has sought to define and measure the construct of "insight" based on literature from psychology, theology, and rhetoric. Her operational definition follows:

> Insight is a type of understanding that results when a person resolves a meaningful dissonance (lack of harmony) through integrating experiences, attitudes, or emotions with the intellect in such a way that the particular resolution is a simple, permanently true, powerful personal knowledge that is used to interpret other dissonance past and future. (1995, 2–3)

Let me translate her definition into language applicable to the teaching journal:

> Insight is understanding that results when a teacher resolves a pedagogical problem by integrating experiences, attitudes, or emotions with intellect so that the resulting basic solution reflects personal understanding of how the problem can be solved now and in the future.

In her study, Murray meticulously developed an Insight Test for a writing assignment that measures the presence of the sixteen features of insight. In her view, insightful writing requires the *confrontation* of a *dissonance*, a kind of problem-solving mentality, the resolution of which is marked by the writer's

new understanding or *new vision* which is achieved through a *simple solution* or basic principle that proves *true over time*. Confrontation of the dissonance involves the *integration of the whole self* emotionally and intellectually. The *limits of knowledge* also become apparent to the writer who is able through *testing* to confirm the validity of the insight and to put it into perspective. The effects of insight are *action*, such as a change in life style; *peace* or relief from the problem; *expansive understanding* in which the true meaning of the insight grows over time; *incorporation of the insight* into *personal history or lifestyle*; and *use of the insight as an interpreting device for past, present, and future events*. Two facilitators encourage insight: a *shift in perspective*, such as the kind of thinking that results from a dialectical process, and a *welcoming atmosphere* (24–38).

Certainly, I recognized many of these features of insight in the GTAs' prefaces. For example, the sense of dissonance was unmistakable in this epigram—a quotation by Charlie Brown—with which one GTA began his preface: "Sometimes I lay awake at night, and I ask, 'Where have I gone wrong?' Then a voice says to me, 'This is going to take more than one night.'" And the emotional and intellectual energies that these new teachers invest in the classroom are evident in journal descriptions of interactions with particular students. But to see if GTAs would realize a causal link between the process of journal keeping and arriving at insight, I asked them to take Murray's Insight Test. I rephrased some of her questions to clarify their relationship to the journal. My adaptation of Murray's test appears in Figure 6–1 on page 74.

Based on Murray's scoring method, which recodes negatively worded items (such as items 3 and 7) to their opposite value, and on her interpretative

Table 6–1. Results of the Insight Test

Writing This Assignment Yielded . . .	Total Test Score	Number of GTAs Scoring in Each Category
An insight experience	150–127	7
Increased understanding	126–103	20
Negligible effect on understanding	102–77	1
Negative effect on understanding	78–55	3
Frustration, isolation, confusion	54–30	0

This section asks questions specifically about your teaching journal. As you answer, recall the purpose, content, and your use of your journal. Don't worry about how "good" it was. All that is important is how much you got out of it then or now. If you didn't get much out of it, please say so. Some questions may seem a bit strangely worded or repetitive because I've adapted them from an instrument developed for a slightly different purpose. Nevertheless, please answer each by circling a response that corresponds to one of the following opinions:

SD=Strongly Disagree D=Disagree N=Neutral
A= Agree SA=Strongly Agree

1. I am ready to put into action something I learned from keeping a teaching journal. SD D N A SA
2. I reached a totally new understanding of my teaching through my journal. SD D N A SA
3. I don't want to review the contents of my teaching journal ever again. SD D N A SA
4. I want to share my thoughts on teaching to help other people. SD D N A SA
5. A lot of heart went into my journal entries. SD D N A SA
6. My understanding of teaching as reflected in the journal has opened up new paths for me to explore. SD D N A SA
7. I don't even know where my journal is and don't plan to look for it. SD D N A SA
8. I feel a sense of accomplishment when I reread my journal. SD D N A SA
9. Teaching is a topic that I was curious about even before I started my journal. SD D N A SA
10. Keeping a journal gave me a chance to struggle with questions I've had about teaching. SD D N A SA
11. My journal helped me see teaching in a new light. SD D N A SA
12. I've decided to teach differently thanks to writing the journal. SD D N A SA

Figure 6–1. Insight Test.

13. After writing about teaching in my journal, I understand better what is at the heart of the profession. SD D N A SA
14. The meaning of teaching keeps growing in my mind. SD D N A SA
15. The teaching journal was a worthless exercise. SD D N A SA
16. I found my whole self involved in keeping a teaching journal. SD D N A SA
17. I see clearly the difference between what I knew about teaching before I kept my journal and what I know now. SD D N A SA
18. Keeping a teaching journal is now part of my life. SD D N A SA
19. I am pleased with the results of my teaching journal. SD D N A SA
20. I didn't care about keeping a teaching journal at all. SD D N A SA
21. I didn't adequately explore my teaching experience at all in my journal. SD D N A SA
22. I came to new understandings by keeping a teaching journal. SD D N A SA
23. My teaching journal doesn't inspire me to teach differently. SD D N A SA
24. Writing about teaching clarified my ideas. SD D N A SA
25. I can't see myself ever forgetting some of the things I wrote about in my journal. SD D N A SA
26. I don't think I'll ever use what I wrote about in my journal for anything. SD D N A SA
27. I didn't get much out of keeping a teaching journal. SD D N A SA
28. I didn't get very involved in keeping a teaching journal. SD D N A SA
29. I have about the same knowledge of teaching now as I did when I wrote my journal. SD D N A SA
30. I can hardly remember what I wrote about in my journal. SD D N A SA

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scale, results of the Insight Test for the thirty-one GTAs who took it are displayed in Table 6–1.

The overwhelmingly positive results surprised me. I could think of more than three GTAs over the last four years who, I suspected, had viewed their teaching journals as busy work, impacting negatively on their understanding. Instead, the scores showed that twenty out of thirty-one GTAs believed their journals had enabled them to reflect on their teaching in ways that increased their understanding and for seven, such understanding led to insight. Items on the test with which the majority of GTAs agreed or strongly agreed were these:

1. I am ready to put into action something I learned from keeping a teaching journal.
3. * I want to review the contents of my teaching journal again.
4. I want to share my thought on teaching to help other people.
7. * I know where my journal is or I would look for it.
9. Teaching is a topic that I was curious about even before I started my journal.
14. The meaning of teaching keeps growing in my mind.
15. * The teaching journal was a worthwhile exercise.
24. Writing about teaching clarified my ideas.
26. I think I will use what I wrote about in my journal.
27. * I got much out of keeping a teaching journal.
29. * My knowledge of teaching has changed since I wrote my journal.

(*Note: I have recast negatively worded statements (*) into positive ones as reflected in recorded scores.)

In particular, the Insight Test showed me that GTAs use their journals to explore their strong curiosity about teaching, to expand and to clarify their understanding, and sometimes to act based on their new perspectives. Thus, these GTAs report that the value of the journal lasts beyond the practicum.

Involving Others in Assessment: Mentor Reports, Exit Interviews, Alumni Surveys, and Job Application Materials

Another AAHE principle of good assessment practice is to involve "representatives from across the educational community" (2). Wider participation minimizes the bias inherent in self-assessment. While studying the outcomes of my practicum, I have recognized ways that others, particularly GTA mentors and the Director of Graduate Studies (DGS), also assess the teacher preparation program. Through mentor reports, exit interviews, and alumni surveys, their findings corroborate and expand what I have learned.

One colleague well qualified to assess a GTA's performance is a mentor. For example, as I mentioned earlier, in LSU's first-year English program, GTAs are paired with an experienced writing teacher who meets with them to discuss teaching strategies, visits their classes, reviews sets of graded essays, and writes an evaluation at the end of the semester. Mentor reports often reflect my objectives for the practicum: GTAs gain confidence during the semester as observed in well-taught classes and helpful critiques of student writing. However, even more instructive are problems that mentors note in their reports. Some GTAs struggle with classroom dynamics—facilitating group work, motivating reluctant writers, engaging students in productive discussion rather than lecturing—while others need help recognizing and analyzing sources of error in student writing. Consequently, mentor reports identify topics to address in the practicum.

Other natural places to assess the teaching practicum are exit interviews with graduates and alumni surveys. In the "President's Column" of the *MLA Newsletter,* Herbert Lindenberger reminds us "that students cannot properly judge the value of a course until sufficient time has elapsed for them to gain perspective on their intellectual development" (1997, 3). When our Director of Graduate Studies (DGS) interviews GTAs upon completion of their degrees, he routinely asks two questions which provide feedback on the practicum. In reply to the interview prompt, "What was most valuable about your academic experience in our M.A./M.F.A./Ph.D. program?" several graduates explain the value of the practicum in preparing them for teaching careers. Another question, "Any thoughts about our course requirements?" has elicited requests for an additional practicum in the teaching of literature or an advanced course in composition pedagogy. The fact that this indirect assessment of the practicum comes through a third party and takes place in the context of GTAs' whole graduate program helps me to gauge long-term effects of the practicum. Also, the alumni survey conducted by our DGS allows me to learn who finds academic jobs and where. Knowing that many of our graduates are employed in liberal arts colleges or community colleges that emphasize teaching more than research enables me to explain to GTAs how the required practicum has career implications even for would-be literary scholars.

Recently I discovered another source of indirect feedback on how well prepared our GTAs are for the job market as I reviewed the stack of applications for instructor positions in our department. By far the most impressive letters from job applicants describe a range of teaching and administrative experiences broader than those we currently offer our GTAs, suggesting ways that we should expand our notion of professional preparation.

Thus, many opportunities exist to involve others in the assessment of teacher preparation. By expanding the number of people who assess the practicum, WPAs corroborate their own findings and perhaps increase other faculty members' sense of responsibility for nurturing the novice teachers in our charge.

Assessment as a Mode of Working

When I decided to assess my practicum, I sought to understand better what GTAs do after the training program. I realize now that assessment is as much about my own practices after the practicum as it is about theirs. Now, I must determine what to do with my findings since end results are meaningful only to the degree that they identify directions for positive changes. The authors of *Assessment in Practice: Putting Principles to Work on College Campuses* remind us that "assessment and decision making must occur in concert in order for improvements to ensue. . . . Linking the two may very well be the most crucial aspect of successful assessment practice" (Banta et al. 1996, 50). Based on my assessment research, I will make the following changes in my practicum:

1. I will seek ways to use professional literature more effectively, stressing its role in professional development. Rather than having GTAs annotate assigned texts in their journals, I will ask them to engage the readings more dialectically, either by articulating and answering a question the author raises or by generating and answering their own questions related to the reading. By showing the contributions of professional literature to informed practice, I hope to convince GTAs to continue reading in rhetoric and composition studies even though the focus of their graduate work may be elsewhere.
2. I will encourage our DGS to revise our graduate curriculum, including a practicum in teaching literature. Such an experimental seminar last spring was oversubscribed; clearly the need and interest exist. Furthermore, because my survey shows that GTAs want to extend their knowledge of composition pedagogy and theory beyond the practicum, perhaps a one-hour course in "Pedagogical Problem Solving" would interest experienced GTAs.
3. I will consider ways to reconfigure the administrative structure of our composition program to involve more GTAs in its day-to-day and decision-making operations. Reading the application letters of new Ph.D.s seeking teaching positions convinces me that our GTAs would benefit from more experiences with committee work or from appointments such as Assistant Director of Freshman English or Assistant Director of the Writing Center as described in "Beyond Apprenticeship: Graduate Students, Professional Development Programs and the Future(s) of English Studies" by Long, Holberg and Taylor (1996).
4. I intend to invite experienced GTAs to my practicum to talk about particular topics, thereby broadening the community of teachers with whom new GTAs interact. Through responses to the Insight Test, GTAs told me they are eager to "share their thoughts on teaching to help other people." I should take advantage of their enthusiasm and expertise.
5. Based on my research, I will be able to introduce the journal assignment to GTAs with renewed confidence in its reflective powers. The first year that I assigned a teaching journal, it was merely a notebook with dividers

to impose organization on the paper load of the practicum. The second year, it took a somewhat reflective turn when I asked GTAs to include brief observations on each class they taught. The third year, I instructed GTAs to pair lesson plans with reflective entries and periodically to summarize what they were learning. Lately, because of findings from the Insight Test, I have begun presenting the journal assignment as rough draft for a teaching portfolio, stressing its potential to be both a process and a product of reflective thought.

But I also have begun to rethink the teaching journal again, this time with Donna Qualley's notions of reflexive inquiry in mind. In *Turns of Thought*, Qualley explains how "reflection is adequate for monitoring our conscious beliefs, but that reflexivity is needed to call up our unconscious, epistemic belief" (1997, 13). She defines reflexivity as "a commitment to attending to what we believe and examining how we came to hold those beliefs *while we are engaged in trying to make sense of an other*" (5). The "other" can take many forms such as ideas, texts, people. Qualley suggests that journalists might use their journal entries as a dialectic with the self as other to examine the what, how, and why of an experience (43). Journals are filled with the voices of others—writing students, authors of professional literature, the WPA and others in the practicum, the mentor—whose ideas can challenge the GTA to "discover, examine, and critique one's claims and assumptions" (3). Might I make the journal experience even more worthwhile for GTAs by encouraging them to work toward the "earned insights" of reflexive thinking rather than "ready-made conclusions" (35) that might characterize a less effective, skills-based practicum?

These are my plans, and as such are specific to my program and my institution. I offer them, as I offered my assessment methods, not as directives for others who prepare teachers for the classroom but as examples of how assessment can promote programmatic change. Assessment of our teaching programs is critical to the success of our writing programs. As Christopher Burnham and Cheryl Nims demonstrate through research on their teaching practicum, "Outcomes assessment directs us to the quality of student writing. But to do so, we must also consider teachers, especially those of us who train GTAs and other novice teachers. These two, student writing and teacher development, are clearly linked" (1995, 52). I hope by describing my own practices that I have illustrated how assessment is integral to the way a WPA reads, thinks, teaches, researches—in short, works.

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7

Reflective Essays, Curriculum, and the Scholarship of Administration

Notes Toward Administrative Scholarly Work

Kathleen Blake Yancey and Meg Morgan

Although the scholarship (indeed the work) of the WPA is necessarily located within a myriad of activities, the role that the WPA plays is surprisingly consistent across purposes and contexts: that of the causal inquirer. As organizational psychologist Donald Schön (1995) explains, the causal inquirer

> investigates puzzling phenomena [such as ways of developing faculty, redesigning ineffective courses, and assessing programs] in order to figure out what to do about them . . . In organizational practice, . . . the very same actions tend to function at the same time as exploratory, intervention, and hypothesis-testing experiments. (87)

In other words, Schön explains the way we work: in defining and then addressing a particular problem, we concurrently work toward constructing a more generalized construct—or, prototype—of that problem and of ways to address it. As WPAs, then, not only do we seek to understand the particulars of our own local contexts, but also we seek in them generalizable issues pertinent to the discipline at large.

To demonstrate this process of causal inquiry and how it might be useful both within and beyond a local context, this chapter addresses two central questions: 1. What do students in our program believe about writing? 2. How might those beliefs contribute toward their development as writers? The process of seeking answers to these questions involves three steps. First, we read in the aggregate a complete set of student reflective essays (gathered from their portfolios) and record what the students in our program claim to know and believe about writing. Second, we consider how what we learn in this reading can contribute to a general model of student development in writing (with additional inquiry on how to move from the local understanding articulated

here to a more practice-based and student-informed model of student rhetorical development). Third, we outline how such work constitutes administrative scholarship.

The Portfolio and the Reflective Essay

Beginning in fall 1994, the University of North Carolina Charlotte began a process of portfolio-based exemption. Modeled in part on the Miami University system of portfolio exemption, our model allows students to exempt the second term of our two-term first-year composition course. The rationale behind the portfolio-based assessment made sense to us. We wanted to be assured that the students receiving credit had considerable experience writing, and writing in a variety of rhetorical situations. The portfolio, with its multiple kinds of texts and its culminating reflective essay, seemed a good vehicle to produce this effect. It also was important to us that we examine the finished writing of students as it might look if they composed it in a composition course—through multiple drafts if necessary, with time to consider the writing and its potential effects on a reader. We also wanted to be assured that students: 1) knew something about writing in general and their own writing in particular, 2) could discuss their own writing in an informed way (i.e., one congruent with our curricular notions of writing and rhetoric), and 3) could propose a plan for improving that writing if it were seen as inadequate. After all, good writing per se, we thought, was not the sole goal of a composition course. Knowing what good writing is, what is good (and not so good) about one's own writing, and knowing how to use that knowledge to achieve good writing are also the real goals of our courses. We thought that portfolios valued all of these. Finally, using the portfolio placed the students in a real and very important rhetorical situation: They were trying to convince a group of English teachers that they were competent enough not to take an English-teacher-taught course. What could be more challenging than that?

We began awarding credit for portfolios in the fall of 1994. Since then we have awarded credit to sixty students, not a large number, but one of sufficient size—this number comprises three sections of composition that don't have to be staffed with part-timers—to encourage us to continue. Overall, we pass about 43 percent of those who submit portfolios. By way of illustration, in the fall of 1994 the faculty read fifty-four portfolios and passed twenty-five. For the current study, we collected the forty-nine portfolios submitted in January 1996. We removed the students' reflective essays and read the set of those essays twice: first, to identify the claims they make about writing; second, to see if writers of different proficiencies make different kinds of claims.

The parameters of the reflective essays were clearly outlined. Students were instructed to respond to three questions, and to do so within an essay of 500–750 words:

- What is the strongest piece of writing in the portfolio, and why do you think it is the strongest?
- What is the weakest piece of writing, and why do you think it is the weakest?
- What might you do to improve the weakest piece of writing?

Given these questions, students are expected to make judgments about their own writing in the context of what they understand "strong" and "weak" writing to be. Equally important for our purposes here, we can infer from these judgments the students' understanding of how well they think they have performed as writers.

A First Reading

A first reading of the reflective essays produced the claims made by all forty-nine students about what made their essays strong; these can be categorized into three sections: 1) a set of a-rhetorical textual features; 2) practice in some rhetorical situations; and 3) conditions outside the rhetorical situation, which may include a practiced set of writing strategies. Admittedly, as is the case in any interpretive endeavor, we found that comments overlapped categories: often it was difficult to place a comment within a single area. However, most of the comments about strengths could be easily classified, and oddly enough, the categories roughly fell into the text/reader/writer schema that has been part of composition teaching for many years. Finally, most frequently the student comments fall into a single category—text, or reader, or writer—suggesting that our students see their writing through a single lens.

Student Comments About the Text

The first area in our schema includes comments that relate specifically to visible features that make texts strong and that any person reading the text in question could identify. From the student comments, we located thirteen textual features, although several are mentioned only once or twice. We present them in order of those most frequently mentioned to those only occasionally mentioned. Also, it is important to note that few students choose any one feature as the defining one; most features are clustered so that several together make for a strong essay. This clustering is apparent in the quoted material from the students' essays. It is also important to note their dependence upon standard wisdom: good writing is equated with organization, content, and style.

1. **A strong essay is logical and well organized**. Sixteen students in our sample state that their essays are strong because they are well organized. Students use different terms to express effective organization, and these terms show that the concept of organization is often tied to content and development, which shows up as the second most mentioned category. In addition, organization means paragraph-level organization as well as discourse-level organization.

> "I think that this is the best written paper that I have completed. The paragraphs are structured correctly. . . ." and "The strongest paper presents a lot of good information in a well-organized fashion."

2. **A strong essay contains details, descriptions, or evidence.** Fourteen students (including some whose responses are described in the previous section) recognize that the details of the text can make or break it. Some of the comments on details are specific; most are general. Seldom are the details tied to any particular purpose; instead, they seem to exist as add-ons, ways to fill in the spaces of a text.

> "The article contains many details which found a place on paper. . . ." and "It stands out from the others because of it:s vivid details and realistic descriptions."

3. **A strong essay is one that uses research of various kinds (text-based, electronic, surveys, and interviews).** Students value the ability to incorporate research in their texts, and ten of the sample of forty-nine mention that research improved the quality of their papers. No student stated that research alone makes a strong essay.

> "I was forced to research my subject at a more in-depth level than I had to in some previous papers." and "'Public School Security: Safe or Sorry' is a strong essay. The resource officer's interview and the quote from the President are both powerful testimonies by authorities."

4. **An essay is strong because the voice and personality of the writer appear in the text.** In this category, the voice and the personality of the writer are seen as textual features, often as words; the text brings into existence or exemplifies these qualities. Ten students mention this feature.

> "When one reads any of my compositions, he/she can detect my personality shining through the window of my words." and "My opinions and memories of the events which led up to my Grandfather's death were depicted in a frank and honest fashion."

5. **In a good essay, sentences are fluent and varied; the words are clear.** Eight students, all but one of them earning credit, mention the positive effects of good style (sentences and words) on their essays.

> "I had no trouble finding the right words to express my thoughts and feelings." and "The writing style is fluent, using good transitions and various sentence sizes, which gives the paper a well rounded [sic] style."

A fewer number of students mentioned **other textual features** that make their essays strong:

6. Seven students state that **strong essays include the ideas and experiences of the writer.**

7. Six students mention **the importance of strong introductions and conclusions.**

8. Five students believe that **their papers are strong because they are mechanically correct,** a relatively small number despite what many English teachers think students value in writing.

9. Four students **attribute some of the essays' strengths to correctly documented sources.**

10. Three students state **the importance of a thesis statement to the text's quality.**

11. Three students also state that **a text "with very few personal opinions" is strong.**

12. Two students state **that a strong text is unconventional or original because it would not be "monotonous."**

13. One student states that **the strong essay addresses a clearly defined issue.**

Student Comments About the Reader or Rhetorical Situation

In this second category, strong essays are seen as rhetorical: The writer addresses strengths within the rhetorical situation, especially awareness of audience. In this category, students may 1) mention the existence of a reader; 2) mention how the reader might respond emotionally to reading the text; 3) mention how the text might influence or guide the reader. Only four students who did not receive credit mentioned any items in this category; fourteen students who did receive credit mentioned items in this category but only two mentioned more than one item. We identified three types of student comments in this category; the most frequently mentioned are described first.

1. **A strong text guides or influences the reader.** Ten students refer to this relationship between the reader and the text.

> ". . . [W]hen they are finished they will have a sense of who I am." and "The analogies comparing such things as the meadows to the 'Sound of Music' or the 'City Life' versus a more abstract one added to making the audience feel as if they were on the Appalachian Trail."

2. **A strong text targets the feelings of readers**. Four students describe how they want the reader to respond to a text in the sense that they state how they want the reader to feel.

> "I wanted my readers to feel as I felt at each painful moment of that visit."

3. **The writer acknowledges that a reader exists but does not describe a role for the reader or for the text**. The fewest number of students (three, all

of whom received credit) merely mention the existence of an audience but do not acknowledge the role of the reader or the text in the rhetorical situation.

> "Another reason I believe that 'Legalization of Marijuana' is the strongest essay is due to the fact that I tried to write for a specific audience. The audience included Congress, the President and the Food and Drug Association [sic]." and "After the revisions, I think it was much clearer who the paper was addressing."

Student Comments About the Writer

In this category, students attribute the strength of their texts to conditions outside the text. These conditions usually cannot be discerned in the text; they are not particularly part of a rhetorical situation. In effect, no reader would be able to locate that condition as a feature of the text. Some students assume these conditions are universal—that the condition must apply if any text is to be strong. Again, the students' responses are ranked by the decreasing number of responses.

1. **The writer has a personal commitment to the piece of writing; the writing situation is emotionally charged and may produce an insight or result from an insight**. Sixty percent of the students (thirty students in all) state that a personal engagement with the writing helped produce their strongest papers. Twelve of those students who received credit and eighteen of those who did not mentioned this condition of writing.

> "My desire to learn more about the topic made my writing have more insight. . . . The closeness of this topic to my heart made my writing stronger." and "Another reason that I consider this to be my strongest paper is that it is something that I had strong emotions about."

2. **The writer revises or writes multiple drafts**. Ten students state that their papers are strong because they rewrote them two or more times. Not all students mention the changes they make in these revisions.

> "Yet I opened my mind, took her advice even farther than normal and wound up practically rewriting the whole paper." and "Each time I revised the paper I would stumble upon a new idea and try to incorporate it into the essay."

3. **The writer expends time and/or effort writing the text.** We often hear our students protest a grade they received in terms of the time and effort they spent on the paper. In their reflective essays, seven students mention the time and/or effort they expended in writing, often conflating the two. Writers also mention diligence and dedication.

> "Hours of research provided the accurate information that supported not only my topic, but also my individual choices . . ." and ". . . I would have to

> say that the essay I worked the longest, hardest and put the must [sic] time into would be classified as my strongest essay."

4. **Classroom writing conditions contribute to the strength of the text.** As writing teachers and administrators, we spend many hours working with student writing: reading drafts, discussing topics, responding in writing. So, we might want to look for the role of teachers or teachers' responses in helping students strengthen their writing. However, in these texts we teachers seldom appear, especially in the comments of those students who earned credit.[1] When we do appear, the news is not always good; sometimes we appear in unflattering ways. Six students specifically mention the teacher as an agent in writing improvement or quality, only one of whom earned credit for the exam.

> "The professor of my English 1101 course really emphasized the importance of being able to think critically. . . . After writing a long paper, my professor required us to reflect on our writing process and criticize what worked and what did not work and why." and "I learned my strengths and weaknesses in writing from the teacher's comments and class interaction."

5. **The writer is well informed.** Six students state that the text is strong because they know something about the topic. Being well informed might have resulted from doing research on the topic, or it might mean that the student has some prior knowledge about the subject. Two students receiving credit and four non-credit students mention this category.

> "All that research made me very well informed on my topic." and "It was very easy for me to write this paper because this memory is so very clear in my own mind."

6. A few students mention **other conditions** that affect the qualities of their writing:

- Three students express a commitment to prewriting or planning—that their strongest papers required them to plan or to be prepared. In one case, the planning included viewing a play "instead of simply reading it" before writing about it.
- One student mentions the personal satisfaction that comes from writing a particular piece.
- One student mentions that the strength of the paper lies in the freedom to choose a personal style and to express creativity. This personal choice has more to do with an innate sense of personality than it does with specific word choices or classroom constraints. "At the college level, you have to start creating your own personal style of writing."
- One student recognizes the role of writing experience or development.

> "This paper was written during ENGL 1101 at UNC Charlotte. It is stronger because I have had a lot more practice writing in comparison to when I wrote the research paper in the eleventh grade."

A Second Reading

Another way to read these reflective essays—to read the data—is to ask what these writers believe about writing generally, not about their own writing in particular. In other words, because of the questions guiding the reflective essay, students need to talk about their own work as *both strong and weak*, and as *revisable*. In the process of this evaluative talk, what kinds of general statements do they make about writing? It is just as important to ask whether the stronger students—those who were awarded the exemption credit—understand writing in the same way as the weaker students do. Or, do these two groups of students have fundamentally different conceptions of writing?

Before discussing these questions, it is important to establish the context governing our findings. First, the reading process from which the next set of understandings was generated was simple and limited. It involved reading the essays randomly, as earlier stipulated; no initial effort was made (nor was any allowed) to distinguish between writers the portfolio process had designated as weak or strong. Rather, all the essays were read in a three-part process:

1. The essays were read simply to see what general claims about writing were embedded in the writer's claims about his or her own writing.
2. The essays were then divided into pass/no pass categories, based on the portfolio results (not on a separate reading of the letters) and reviewed again.
3. The essays were reviewed specifically to discern patterns that were obtained across type of writer: exempted (strong) and non-exempted (weak).

Interestingly, this process produced some anomalies. For instance, it would be reasonable to suppose that writers who earned credit would be insightful about writing generally or their own writing specifically, but this was not always the case. By the same token, some writers whose reflective texts seemed strong to us were denied credit. So there was no one-to-one correspondence between a strong reflective essay and credit awarded. On the other hand, we really shouldn't be surprised by these observations: Our portfolio does not privilege the reflective essay.[2] It is only one of several texts and not the most important text. Indeed, it would be difficult to know in any given set which, if any, was the most important text, and there are some who would claim that the purpose of portfolios in fact is to put such comparisons under erasure (see Allen, et al., 1997).

However, in general, the expected patterns did prove out. The reflective essays that seemed the strongest were written, in general, by students who exempted, suggesting that indeed stronger writers can both: 1) *write well*, and

2) *discourse well about that writing.* A final observation about these writers also surprises: The strong writers and the weak writers understand writing in very similar ways. The difference between them isn't in a basic understanding. It's in related factors: in the significance they attribute to writing, in the causes of good writing they identify, and in the writing process they elaborate and describe. *Developmentally, we might say that all these writers start from the same place, but the stronger writers move beyond that place in differentiated, complex, and nuanced ways.*

Then what are the understandings that these writers articulate?

First, when the set of essays is gathered, the first text feature distinguishing them is that they aren't all essays. The students were directed to write essays, of course, and over half of them did that. However, some preferred a more personal and perhaps familiar form, the letter, and others wrote what we might call a cross-genre text, a "lettered essay," a text that includes a title (like an essay) and both salutation and closing (like a letter). The distinctions among genre signify: Twenty of the strong writers compose an essay and only three in this group a letter, whereas sixteen of the weak writers compose an essay, five a letter, and five more the cross-genre "lettered essay." In other words, 40 percent of the weaker writers get the genre wrong. Could it be that stronger writers simply are better at following directions? Could it be that they understand and can enact differences among genres, and that this understanding is part of what enhances their writing performance? The last query finds support in the students' discussion about their own writing: When discussing their own texts, strong writers located their observations as *kinds of texts*, while the weaker writers saw all texts as a type—the essay. In other words, the stronger writers talked about writing that worked as a kind of writing—a narrative, an argument, a research paper—while the weaker writers expressed a universal sense of text without distinctions of genre. If the writing of one group is in fact "better" than that of another, perhaps it's in part as a function of this kind of discursive understanding.

Second, writers talk about their writing relative to audience, but constructs of audience vary according to the proficiency of the writer. The weaker writers describe an audience that is co-identical with themselves: I like it; therefore, the audience will as well. It's audience as ego-projection. In contrast, the stronger writers see the audience in two ways: as other and as specific readers. Still, the effects of this form of audience construction weren't always beneficent. For instance, sometimes the strong writers rely too heavily on the judgment of others, claiming that a text is strong precisely because it satisfied a particular audience, often an Advanced Placement examining board or a teacher awarding an *A*. Other writers operate tautologically: Because others value their work, the work is valuable. Though spurious, this argument is endorsed by many educational institutions at the same time that it works against the kind of independent judgment characterizing stronger writers.

Third, writers cited the textual feature of details as important. Again, their importance varies along lines of writer proficiency. For weaker writers, details

were a universal good, regardless of rhetorical situation: the more details, the better. On the other hand, the stronger writers valued details, but only to the extent that they supported a specific claim or attracted a particular audience. Interestingly, in considering why a specific text was weak and how it might be revised, the stronger writers often generated the very details that might go into a revision, thus demonstrating that they not only understood the concept they were articulating, but also could do the discursive work such an understanding recommended.

Fourth, writers understood pathos as a key feature, either/both as part of the process of writing text and/or as textual feature appropriate to a particular intent. Generally, our writers understood pathos to be delivered in or through writing. For weaker writers, it seems an independent agent, whereas for stronger writers, it is, as with other features, rhetorically understood. For instance, sixteen of the twenty-six weaker writers attribute rhetorical success or lack thereof to something we could categorize as pathos apart from the text: The writer's attitude toward the material in the text; the enjoyment the writer felt during composing; the friendship developed with an interview subject. Also, for these writers pathos is (again) a universal: When these writers felt that the writing was "going well," they expected the text to be "good." However, stronger writers, were less sure of pathos as a relevant factor: Only ten of the twenty-three cited pathos as a factor, and in each case the specific attitude was identified. Perhaps as important, these writers were unlike the weak writers in that rather than seeing a congruence between felicitous composing and acceptable text, several of the strong writers perceived an inverse relationship between positive feelings experienced during composing and outcomes, especially when they perceived a task to be difficult.This distinction between the writers regarding how they understand composing may signal an important developmental benchmark: distinguishing between how one feels during composing and textual efficacy. Put another way, the stronger writers understand difficulty and ambiguity as part of the process; they don't (over) rely on how they feel during composing as an index of how well a text finally will work.

Fifth, writers describe a stage-model process of writing at odds with current theories about writing. The writers here speak in chorus as they describe their writing: first, get it right with the self; second, prepare it for others—and it's only the stronger writers who make it to the second stage. It's an aberration of process theory, one decidedly at odds with the post-process model proposed by Joseph Harris (1997). In his critique of the process model, Harris makes the point, made earlier and differently in the research of Flower and Hayes (1981), that in getting the writing right with others, writers do get the writing right with themselves; it's not stage model, but recursive and concurrent composing. While we may think we are teaching a flexible model of composing in our "delivered" curriculum (Yancey 1998), the very universality of the description suggests otherwise. Moreover, the truncated version of this model fits quite squarely with the earlier observations weaker students made about self-as-audience: Is there a cause and effect here?

Sixth, the stronger writers perceive a dichotomy between personal/creative writing and academic writing, especially when they talk about revising. To make academic writing more creative, these writers suggest changing or widening research methods.

A Model of Student Development and Curricular Work

Based on these findings, what do we see? Based on what our students understand about writing and about their own texts, we need to revisit several components of our first-year composition curriculum. Phrased as questions, these components include the following items:

- How can we help students develop more elaborated, complex, and recursive composing processes?
- How can we make the curriculum more specific about both rhetorical situation and genre?
- How can we invite students to talk—in a practiced, disciplined, and thoughtful curricular way—about their composing processes and about their judgments about their own texts?
- Are the patterns we saw in these reflective texts indicative of larger patterns, not only on our campus but also elsewhere?

Embedded within these questions is a patterned developmental path: A writer moves from seeing himself or herself as independent agent working universally and a-rhetorically on texts with identifiable features to constructing himself or herself as situated—within several rhetorical situations to which a writer brings intellectual expertise, creativity, and judgment. As part of this developmental process, the writer develops a tolerance for ambiguity, an understanding that there is no necessary relationship between how a composer feels and the textual result.

Perhaps the key finding in these reflective readings is that stronger students are able to talk about both their writing and generic writing (i. e., writing in a general way), whereas weaker writers cannot. Of course, we can't from this study establish causality, as Schön suggests: Did the stronger writers have the opportunity to talk more and thus improve, or is the talk generated by having more to talk about—or do the two go hand-in-glove? What we can conclude is that this difference exists for this population; that it signifies; and that it suggests curricular consideration. Perhaps we need to include a Vygotskian thread in any writing course—one where students not only write but also explain that writing to others—to help all writers, but weaker writers particularly. Such a first-year course is a course in rhetoric and writing, to be sure; but to do that, it becomes a course in *talking about* writing as well.

Administrative Scholarship

The claim of administrative scholars is that the very stuff of their work has epistemological value; that from this work knowledge can be—and is—created. This study illustrates this claim by means of a common administrative task, in this case the task of exemption, to show that knowledge about our students can be generated, can be employed in new curricular designs, and can lead us to take on new inquiries.

In this study, we worked as reflective practitioners, specifically as causal inquirers, seeking to learn about how our students have "experienced" the first-year composition curriculum we think we have "delivered" (Yancey 1998). The theory is that the more we are able to articulate the delivered curriculum and the experienced curriculum, the more likely it is that we can align one with the other and in doing so, create a coherent and dynamic curriculum. Therefore, we set about the task of inquiring into the experienced curriculum by following Lee Schulman's (1996) advice. Citing Elinor Och's work on the knowledge-making work of physicists, Schulman argues that knowledge making requires two key moves: 1) occluding the flow of work, and 2) explaining it to others. In the process of completing these activities, Schulman claims, we make knowledge, especially about teaching and learning. More specifically, to explain to others what we learned about the experienced curriculum from students' reflective essays, we set about

- locating evidence of the experienced curriculum (in the reflective letters),
- reading the evidence in multiple ways,
- discerning patterns in the evidence, but not looking for false unities in those patterns,
- framing that evidence according to other available evidence about the teaching of writing, and
- drawing tentative conclusions for curricular design and raising other, related questions.

Specifically, we think we discern signs that the first-year curriculum should be widened: to include not only writing and writing-related activities (e. g., reading and critique), but also a Vygotskian writing about writing. How to do that is the next challenge, and seeing if that change produces intended effects still another one.

What is this kind of scholarship? Such a question, of course, suggests a more crucial question: What, after all, is scholarship? If we cannot answer this question, then we've generated only (if considerable) sound and fury. But the fact that these questions are being taken up now—in venues as different as Schön's work on causality and in the social sciences and Zebroski's (1998) in composition studies—suggests that it's a question producing multiple an-

swers. In a postmodern age, what do we know, after all? Perhaps more than we think. For one thing, as Schön argues, we know that this kind of scholarship—that dealing with people and learning and teaching—cannot be conducted in a laboratory, nor in an enclosed library. It only can be conducted where students meet the stuff of the curriculum: in school. In addition, this kind of scholarship assumes that all knowledge is itself a form of practice which in turn must be theorized, as James Zebroski argues:

> the primary danger . . . in academe is philosophical idealism, the notion that ideas, knowledge, and theory are somehow independent of and above the material fray, somehow more truthful than mere practice, let alone mere teaching. I instead will focus on practice to emphasize the connections among, and the materiality of, practices, including . . . 'theorizing practice.' Theory is practice, a practice of a particular kind and practice is always theoretical. (1998, 39)

As WPAs, our practices are theoretical as well; reflection is one means of understanding how our theories and our practices interact and inform each other, one means of helping students learn, one means of making knowledge upon which more humane learning environments can be created.

Notes

1. On the other hand, it could be that these strong students are learning to do more than please the teacher, which would mean that the absence of talk about teachers-as-readers would be a good thing from a curricular perspective. What is clear is that we have an interesting question to put to these students: What role, if any, do your teachers-as-readers play in helping you compose and assess your own texts?

2. Neither the role of the reflective text in the portfolio, nor the extent of its influence on readers, is entirely clear. For instance, readers at Miami University have claimed that the reflective letter of their portfolio exerts not less influence on them than the primary texts, but more (Sommers 1993). Some, like Charles Schuster (1994), see such influence as highly problematic, while others, like researchers at Cincinnati (Schultz et al. 1997), see it as inevitable: a form of narrativizing that is not inconsistent with this kind of assessment. As may be apparent, we have designed our reflective text to exert "confirmational evidence": that is, to provide additional evidence for a decision that is already in the process of being made on the basis of the primary texts by the reader. For additional discussion of this issue, see Yancey (1998), especially Chapters Four and Seven.

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8

Local Research and Curriculum Development

Using Surveys to Learn About Writing Assignments in the Disciplines[1]

Irwin Weiser

As writing program administrators, we owe the very existence of our positions to the acknowledgment in higher education, tacit at least, that students must be able to write effectively if they are going to succeed in school and beyond. As our literature, conversations, and e-mail exchanges on the Writing Program Administrators Listserv (WPA-L) regularly acknowledge, our colleagues throughout our institutions expect that students will enter our institutions unprepared to write as well as we would like them to. Of course, this is not a new expectation. Almost as soon as institutions of higher learning opened their doors in the United States, faculty bemoaned the writing abilities of their students. As David Russell (1991), James Berlin (1987) and Robert Connors (1991) pointed out in their histories of the teaching of writing in the United States, by the last quarter of the nineteenth century, Departments of English were established largely to address the perceived literacy crisis that had been caused in part by the shift in the university's role from providing a classical education for the sons of the elite to training members of the middle class for work in business, industry, and the professions. In 1874 Harvard responded to what its faculty perceived as the illiteracy of its students by instituting the first university-wide composition course, which by 1897 was the only required course in the curriculum, and other colleges and universities followed suit (Berlin 1987, 20–21). The assumption that students need such instruction is, I like to believe, based not only on the notion that learning to write is a good thing, but also in the recognition that there is a connection between writing and learning. So, we in composition programs are charged, and have, especially in the last twenty-five years or so, come to welcome the charge, to begin the process of preparing students to write and learn more effectively than they do when they arrive at our institutional doors.

Two issues complicate writing program administrators' efforts to develop curricula which will help students become better prepared for writing in the academy. First, beyond oft- and loudly-voiced concerns about clarity and correctness, there is no consensus about what good academic writing is. Indeed, David Bartholomae has suggested that there is, in fact, no agreement about what academic writing is, pointing out that "Academic writing is a single thing only in convenient arguments"(1995, 62). The structure of discourse, the level of formality, what counts as evidence, the amount of information appropriate to include for readers, whether or not to use graphics or section headings, how to cite and document sources—all these vary from discipline to discipline, and even within disciplines may vary according to the nature of inquiry: empirical research, theoretical argument, speculative essay and so on. The range of what is considered academic discourse thus limits what can be taught in an introductory writing course serving students from all disciplines and taught by specialists in composition (or as is more often the case, English department graduate students and adjunct faculty whose specialties are only sometimes in composition), not by specialists in those disciplines.

Second, compositionists are still in the early stages of conducting research into what kinds of writing students are being asked to do in courses they take after introductory composition. Most of the research conducted in this area was done in the context of developing upper-division writing-intensive courses or improving Writing Across the Curriculum (WAC) programs rather than with the purpose of connecting it to what is taught in introductory composition.[2] Composition courses located in English departments cannot prepare students from every academic discipline to write for each of those disciplines, but we can help them understand some principles of writing and introduce them to some types of writing they are likely to encounter if we have a better understanding of what these types are. However, in order to develop writing courses that do this, writing program administrators must conduct research into the kinds of writing students in their programs will be doing after they complete introductory composition.

The research described in the following pages was designed to provide the introductory writing program at Purdue with the information we need to revise such a course. Like many of the other projects described in this collection, and like much of the research writing program administrators conduct, it is local. That is, it has been conducted in a specific institutional setting, and was designed to provide information for a specific composition program which exists in that setting. Like much WPA research, it arose not simply out of curiosity, but because as Director of Composition, it is one of my responsibilities to question whether our courses are accomplishing their goals. Despite its local origins and context, it is also like much of the research conducted by other writing program administrators because it has implications which extend to other contexts. I hope the survey itself will prove useful to writing program administrators who are interested in seeking additional information about writ-

ing in their own institutions, and the results of the survey may provide comparative data for those who choose to replicate this research.

But even within its local context, the kind of institutional research described here should be valued *as research*, and not—as is too often the case—as service or administration. Often, this kind of research is neither designed to be nor is it viewed by journal editors or reviewers to be publishable, particularly if it is closely tied to curricular developments at a particular institution. Nevertheless, local research projects contribute to knowledge making and to better teaching. Good local studies are designed and carried out according to the same standards as any other research. They yield large amounts of data demanding the same careful analysis and critical interpretation as any other empirical project. Thus, they should be identified, valued, and evaluated as research, not only by the writing program administrators who conduct them, but also by the department chairs and deans who evaluate the work of WPAs and who make decisions which affect the writing programs and by tenure, salary, and promotions committees.

Project Background

As a way to learn more about the nature of writing assignments students are likely to encounter in courses in the School of Liberal Arts at Purdue, I developed the questionnaire which appears in the Appendix at the end of this chapter. I sent the questionnaire to all faculty members in the School, and received completed questionnaires from 184—half of the faculty, representing every department in a school which encompasses humanities, arts, and social and behavioral sciences.[3] My decision to conduct a survey and to send it to all members of the faculty rather than to draw a random sample was based on my desire to seek as much information about as wide a range of courses as possible rather than a representation of the information. In this chapter I want to highlight some of the information I gathered from this survey and then briefly describe a series of writing assignments I developed and that are being used in a number of sections of English 102, a second semester composition course which focuses on academic writing. My intention is to demonstrate how the kind of information yielded by the survey research can contribute to WPAs' understanding of the broader curriculum at their institutions and can consequently enable them to develop a writing curriculum responsive to and based on a firmer understanding of what "academic writing" means on their campuses. But first, one explanation of our context. Purdue University does not have a writing across the curriculum program. During a recent revision of the core curriculum of the School of Liberal Arts (the second largest school at the university, with over six thousand students), faculty approved a requirement for writing-intensive courses, but at this time, funding for implementation has not been available. Thus, the vast majority of students at the university are re-

quired to take only two writing courses, both introductory and both usually taken during students' first year.

Key Findings

1. Faculty in the School of Liberal Arts do assign writing in undergraduate courses. Ninety percent of the respondents (165 of 184) indicate that they require students to write. The following responses are based on those 165 surveys. Of the few who indicated that they do not require writing, most reported either that they do not teach undergraduate courses or that they felt large class sizes made requiring writing impractical.
2. While the least writing is being assigned in 100-level courses, nevertheless 82 percent of the respondents who teach those courses assign some writing. In upper-level courses, 97 percent (200- and 400-level) to 99 percent (300-level) of the faculty report requiring some writing.
3. As might be expected, most of the writing completed by students is for examinations, with the most frequent type of writing at all levels being paragraph-length responses to essay questions on exams, and short answer exam questions being the second most frequent form of writing in 100–300 level courses. In 300- and 400-level courses, students do more extended writing, particularly in the form of short, documented research papers of seven to twelve pages and reviews of books or articles.
4. Again, as might be expected, students write increasingly more as they take more advanced courses, although at the 100–300 level, ten to twenty pages is the most typical amount of writing assigned during a semester. At the 400-level, more faculty indicated they assign between twenty and forty pages per semester than any other range.
5. While students do a great amount of their writing in one class period during exams, faculty appear to be generous in giving students time to complete longer papers. Sixty respondents indicated that students have over four weeks to complete most writing assignments and forty-two respondents indicated that students have between two and four weeks. Only fourteen indicated that writing assignments are typically made in one class and due for the next class.
6. Consistent with the high use of essay exams, nearly all respondents (155) report that their writing assignments ask students to "Display an understanding of course materials." Other frequent goals of assignments: "Apply a theory or concept to a situation or problem" (120); "Argue a position" (116); "Respond to a text, performance, or personal experience" (107); "Review or summarize others' positions" (93). However, the comparatively low number of respondents (72) who indicated that students are asked to "Practice writing in a form often employed in your dis-

cipline" suggests that undergraduate students are not being introduced to specific disciplinary or professional discourse genres.

7. Seventy percent (115) of the respondents report that they expect students to incorporate information from sources other than those assigned in the course. Of those sources, scholarly journals (97 responses) and scholarly books (96) are most commonly expected. Fewer than half of the faculty expect students to use popular press periodicals or newspapers, and fewer than 20 percent expect students to use government publications, television or film, or popular books.
8. In 100- and 200-level courses, students typically are not expected to read and use scholarly journals; but in 300- and 400-level courses, they are.

Implications

What does this information suggest for those writing program administrators designing the curriculum for courses which are supposed to introduce students to academic writing? First, it suggests that we at Purdue can correctly and confidently tell students that they will be writing in courses they take, and that they can expect to write more and to do more complex writing as they take more advanced courses. Students often enter our courses perplexed and unhappy that they have been required to take composition. One reason they feel this way is the common campus myth, which they apparently hear from other students and infer from the course descriptions of the introductory courses they are taking at the same time they are taking composition, that they won't be writing many papers during their college careers. The responses to the survey suggest otherwise, at least for students who take advanced courses in the School of Liberal Arts, and thus this research has provided composition teachers with concrete information to counter this form of student resistance.

More important, survey responses suggest that students need to have some experience and instruction in a variety of types of writing. They need to write short papers, based on single or a few sources; they need to write longer papers based on more extensive research; they need to begin to understand differences between types of publications—especially between popular and general readership periodicals and scholarly journals and books; and they need the ability to write short, clear, direct responses to examination questions. It is particularly noteworthy that the kinds of materials often used in introductory writing courses—popular press and media—are not used often in other courses. While I would not suggest that these materials should not be used in composition courses (I think, in fact, there are many good reasons why they should), this research has led us to recognize that students in English 102 must learn to work with a range of materials, including those typically considered more scholarly.

Curriculum Developments

As a result of this research, I have been able to examine and revise some aspects of our second semester course, informed not by assumptions about what kinds of writing students might do, but instead by information provided by the faculty who will be teaching them. My goal has been to develop a sequence of assignments which, with one exception, build upon one another in an attempt to give students instruction and practice in some of the types of academic writing they are likely to encounter in courses in the School of Liberal Arts.

The assignments are a summary of an article; a review of a book or article from a scholarly, professional, or trade journal; a report which explains a concept, issue, or problem, researched through several sources; a brief research proposal for a longer paper; the longer paper, identified as the term project; and an essay examination. With the exception of the essay examination, which some instructors choose to assign early in the semester and some later, I have listed the assignments in the order students complete them. The intention is to provide students with increasingly complex reading, writing, and research tasks which culminate in an eight-to-twelve page documented term project.

These assignments respond to some of the key findings from the survey. For example, the summary and review assignments prepare students for later writing tasks which ask them to "review or summarize others' positions" and "respond to a text, performance, or personal experience." The report, research proposal, and term project provide students with additional practice in these strategies as well as arguing a position and applying a theory or concept to a situation or problem. These latter three assignments also provide the context for teaching students how to synthesize what they have learned from other sources and to incorporate that information into their own arguments.

My descriptions of these assignments have been generic: what the assignments are, what they ask students to do. I now address the matter of content. What are these students asked to write about? While the assignments are deliberately broad enough to allow instructors and/or students to choose almost any topic, our goal is for these assignments to prepare students for university-level research. Instructors working with these assignments are asking students to choose topics and resources appropriate to their majors, career plans, or a course or courses they are taking or have taken. For example, the summary assignment requires students to select an article from a recent periodical related to a topic in a specific academic field which they are studying. The review assignment requires students to review a book or article from a scholarly, professional, or trade journal and suggests that students make their choice based on a topic they might want to investigate for their term project. The explanatory report assignment allows students to learn more about a specific problem, issue, or concept in the academic field they've chosen, and the proposal and term project represent a more extended effort to write about that

field. In this way, the assignments provide not only a sequence of more and more complex writing tasks, but also a sequence of increasingly focused investigation of a topic in the student's academic field. This approach helps students become familiar with the kinds of resources used in the disciplines they will continue to study, in particular to learn something about the journals their instructors in later courses may expect them to use.

The remaining assignment for the course is a unit on taking essay examinations. This is not a new assignment and not part of the sequence of discipline-related assignments, but it was clear from the survey responses that examination writing is the most frequent kind of writing students do, and thus that it would be appropriate to continue to use this assignment. The goal of this unit is to help students learn to read examinations carefully—to understand what they are expected to do, to pick up the cues instructors usually give about how much weight a question carries and thus how much time to spend on it, how many questions to answer, and how to quickly develop clear, concise responses. Most instructors assign this unit sometime between the fourth and sixth weeks of the semester in the hopes that it will help students prepare for midterm exams; others assign it shortly before final exams.

In some ways, the assignments I have been describing are fairly conventional. Variations of some of them can be found in established writing textbooks and in other writing courses. To an extent, I'm not particularly surprised by this, because it supports the idea that there are some common genres and features of academic discourse, at least in the humanities and social sciences. What is different about the assignment sequence I've described is that it *is* a sequence, one which allows students to develop their abilities to write in the university through a series of related and increasingly more complex tasks. More important, the course emphasizes that learning to write is a continuing process, that no single composition course can teach students everything they will need to know in order to write successfully in the various disciplines they study. It is certainly not enough to teach students common genres of academic writing, however valuable that instruction may be. In addition, we need to encourage students to develop what Marilyn Cooper (1986) has called an ecological model of writing, one which helps them recognize the complexity of writing in new and unfamiliar contexts. These assignments then, are one effort to help students enter their subsequent courses prepared to continue their development as writers and learners.

More significantly, the rationale for this curriculum is grounded in information gathered through WPA research. As I suggested earlier, administrators of introductory writing programs have a responsibility to develop curricula that prepare students for the writing they will do after they complete composition courses. Research of the kind I have been describing is frequently motivated by our position and responsibility, and that may be one distinguishing feature of WPA research. Of course, we do pursue scholarly projects motivated by our individual intellectual interests, and in that regard we are indistinguish-

able from our colleagues who are not program administrators. But this chapter, as well as the other chapters in this collection, emphasizes that the work of being a WPA raises questions and presents problems which can best be addressed by research.

The Value of Local Research

The research I have described and the development of writing assignments based on it are a response to a local situation—a school which values writing but which has not yet been able to implement a desired writing intensive program, a large introductory writing program which recognizes its responsibility to prepare students for a variety of writing assignments while they are at the university, and a particular WPA's desire to learn more about the nature of those assignments.[4] Such local research enables writing program administrators to fulfill their responsibilities to students, staff, and colleagues and contributes to their own and to their institution's understanding of the role of writing in students' education. In arguing for the value of this research, I do not claim that the responses I received to the survey are the same others using it at other institutions would receive, nor that the assignments I outlined are models for all courses with goals similar to ours. However, I do want to argue that local research of the type I have illustrated here is vital to the work of writing program administrators. Writing program administrators' daily responsibilities raise the questions and provide the impetus for our research. It is situated in our local contexts, and it is designed to respond to local needs or to investigate local problems. While frequently it can apply to other contexts and while frequently it can be useful to other writing program administrators facing similar situations, its value cannot always be measured by whether it is disseminated through the traditional channels of journal publication or conference presentations. Such work must be recognized, valued, and rewarded by the institutions that use and are transformed by it.

Notes

1. I want to acknowledge the support of released time for this project from The Center for Undergraduate Instructional Excellence in School of Liberal Arts at Purdue University and the help of Raymond Smith of Indiana University, Christine Hult of Utah State University, and Ed Nagelhout of the University of Nevada–Las Vegas, who reviewed an early draft of the questionnaire used in this research.

2. Notable exceptions are Lucille P. McCarthy's "A Stranger in Strange Lands: A College Student Writing Across the Curriculum" (1987) and Anderson, et al's "Cross-Curricular Underlife: A Collaborative Report on Ways with Academic Words" (1990).

3. The first question on the survey asks faculty to indicate whether or not they require writing in any of their undergraduate courses. Only nineteen (10 percent) of the respondents indicated that they did not. I speculate that many of the faculty who did not

respond do not require writing, but there is no specific evidence to support that speculation other than the quite lop-sided positive response.

4. I do not mean to suggest that our program and curriculum focus exclusively on academic writing, nor that we view our work simply as "service" to the rest of the university. The course described here is the second part of a series of courses, the first part of which provides students with practice in writing and reading for a variety of contexts, audiences, and purposes. More advanced writing courses focus on workplace and other professional writing genres and issues.

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Appendix

School of Liberal Arts Writing Assignment Survey

Your department: _____

Your area (e.g., Social Psychology, International Politics) _____

1. Do you require students to write in any of the *undergraduate* courses you teach?

   Yes _____ No _____

   If your response is yes, please continue with question 2.
   If your response is no, please indicate the conditions which make writing assignments impractical or inappropriate for your courses (for example, class size, nature of the course, time required to evaluate written work, do not teach undergraduate courses), then return this questionnaire to _____, via campus mail.

2. Do you require writing in:

   100-level courses Yes _____ No _____ Don't teach _____

   200-level courses Yes _____ No _____ Don't teach _____

   300-level courses Yes _____ No _____ Don't teach _____

   400-level courses Yes _____ No _____ Don't teach _____

3. Which of the following best describe the writing assignments you make? Please check all that apply.

	100-level	200	300	400
Short answer (1–5 sentences) exam responses	_____	_____	_____	_____
Several paragraph-length essay-exam responses	_____	_____	_____	_____
Reviews of books or articles	_____	_____	_____	_____
Short (7–12 pages) documented research papers	_____	_____	_____	_____
Longer research papers	_____	_____	_____	_____
Original research projects (case studies, etc.)	_____	_____	_____	_____
Other (please specify)	_____	_____	_____	_____

4. Approximately how much writing do you require of students during a semester?

	100-level	200	300	400
Fewer than 5 pages	_____	_____	_____	_____
5-10 pages	_____	_____	_____	_____
10-20 pages	_____	_____	_____	_____
20-40 pages	_____	_____	_____	_____
40 pages or more	_____	_____	_____	_____

5. Approximately how much time do students have to complete most writing assignments?

One class period _____

From one class to the next _____

One week _____

Two weeks _____

Two to four weeks _____

Over four weeks _____

6. Do you *allow*, *encourage*, or *require* (circle any that apply) students to show and discuss with you, a teaching assistant, each other, or a Writing Lab tutor drafts of writing assignments prior to submitting them for grading?

If students have this opportunity, do many take advantage of it?

7a. Do your writing assignments ask your students to (Please check all that apply):

Display an understanding of course materials _____

Apply a theory or concept to a situation or problem _____

Propose a solution to a problem _____

Respond to a text, performance, or personal experience _____

Review or summarize others' positions _____

Argue a position _____

Practice writing in a form often employed in your _____

discipline (e.g., a proposal, technical report, review)

Other (please explain) _____

7b. Do your writing assignments typically call for some of these tasks more often than others? If so, please indicate which.

8a. For formal writing assignments, do you expect students to incorporate information from sources other than those specifically assigned in the course (i.e. textbooks, reserve materials, lectures)?

Yes _____ No _____

8b. If your answer is yes, what sources do you expect them to use ? (Check all that apply)

Popular press periodicals _____

Newspapers _____

Television/film _____

Popular books _____

Government publications _____

Scholarly books _____

Scholarly journals _____

Other (please specify) _____

9a. Do you expect students in 100- and 200-level courses to read and use scholarly journals for writing assignments you make?

Yes _____ No _____

9b. Do you expect students in 300- and 400-level courses to read and use scholarly journals for writing assignments you make?

Yes _____ No _____

9c. If you answered yes to either 9a. or b., please list the titles of several journals you think undergraduates who enroll in your courses should find accessible.

10a. Do you expect students in 100- and 200-level courses to use reference works such as indices, abstracts, and bibliographies in your field for writing assignments you make?

Yes _____ No _____

10b. Do you expect students in 300- and 400-level courses to use such reference works for writing assignments?

Yes _____ No _____

10c. If you answered yes to either 10a. or b., please list the titles of key reference works you introduce to students in your undergraduate classes.

9

Preserving Our Histories of Institutional Change

Enabling Research in the Writing Program Archives

Shirley K Rose

It's not unusual for a WPA to handle—to create, review, evaluate, refer to, or respond to—more than a hundred documents in a single day. Simply dealing with these documents—getting the day's work done—can be an overwhelming task. Many of us might rather see the paperwork disappear than take the responsibility for retaining, organizing, and preserving it. However, in this chapter I will argue not only that developing an effective records management program and establishing, developing, and preserving a program archive should be a priority for WPAs but also that WPAs are uniquely qualified to undertake this significant cultural project. Drawing examples from my own local institutional context in the Introductory Writing Program at Purdue University, I will define briefly what constitutes archival records, discuss why writing programs need to preserve them and why WPAs should retain intellectual control over them, explain some basic principles and approaches to archival management, and speculate on reasons for WPAs' lack of attention to such a project. Other chapters in this volume by Ruth Mirtz and Barbara L'Eplattenier will demonstrate the usefulness of program archives for individual WPAs' local institutional research and for more broadly-based studies of practices in writing program administration.

What Belongs in a Writing Program Archive?

The bulging and chaotic contents of file cabinets and the papers in piles on the shelves of the writing program office are not writing program archives—although they are the potential makings of one. Laura Millar (1996) offers this definition of archival records:

> Archival records are those records created by an individual, organization, business, government, or other institution and kept for their continuing value

> as evidence of the function and activities of the agency. Archival records are confirmation of existence; they are in a literate society a way in which people or organizations can prove their identity and their place in the world, just as stories and totems and songs have provided a culture and identity for people in non-literate societies. (36)

In the course of its dynamic, day-to-day and year-by-year existence, a writing program generates thousands of records that eventually should earn a place in the program's archive. Agenda and minutes from meetings of committees with responsibilities for directing the writing program, reports (such as annual reports or enrollment reports) prepared by program administrators, correspondence related to the operation or direction of the program, descriptions of curricula, and records of staffing practices are just a few of the records WPAs and other program participants create and use that will have long-term archival value. In order to preserve these records in a usable form for eventual use by researchers—by future administrators for the program and by other historians of composition studies, practices of writing program administration, and educational institutions—WPAs should establish archives for their writing programs.

Why Do Writing Programs Need Archives?

Archives have value for writing program administrators' research because they provide evidence of the functions and activities of the program and its participants. Research in our program archives helps us to understand the history of our own programs. By examining archival records we begin to recover the values and beliefs that have informed decisions about the program in the past and to reconstruct the processes by which current policies and practices have been developed (see Chapter 10). Our programs' archival records provide us with valuable clues to the ways in which the cultures of our writing programs developed and how our programs have influenced and been influenced by their broader institutional contexts.

The ways we define and carry out our responsibilities as writing program administrators are informed by our knowledge of customary practices and critical events in our programs' past. Research in the writing program's archives informs an administrator's planning and decision making for the program's future, for curriculum development projects and faculty development initiatives. Archival research allows us to evaluate what we have done well in the past and what needs further development by providing us with the facts and figures necessary for identifying significant changes and trends. Archival research on our programs encourages and allows us to take a long-term perspective on the development of the program by aiding us in constructing the "big picture." By examining past projects and practices we can learn what is do-able in our institutional context and what the potential roadblocks are,

which will help us to do more realistic planning for future projects. Information we glean from archival research can support our arguments to others who are responsible for and involved in decision making for the program, as well. Our archives can provide the evidence we need when we present rationales for current practices or the data we need to support proposals for change.

For WPAs, maintaining and using program archives becomes a recursive process: by reviewing program archives, we can understand our program's strengths and weaknesses. This understanding informs our decisions about records management practices, which in turn improves the usability of our archives and enhances their value as a research resource. When we have useful and usable archives, we are more likely to review them as a part of our decision-making process. A functional archive is one of the most valuable legacies a writing program administrator can grant to the next person who takes on the responsibilities of the position.

Because our writing program archives can be of value to researchers other than ourselves, we make a significant contribution to research and scholarship when we maintain usable program archives. Other participants in the local writing program can find useful information in program archives. Members of the administrative staff better understand the location of their specific programs in the context of the writing program as a whole by using information in archival records such as job descriptions, program development proposals, and correspondence with other administrators to construct the evolution of their own administrative roles. Faculty governance committees with responsibilities for directing the program may find archival information—such as committee minutes reflecting the rationale for existing policies—useful to them in making decisions about changes in policy. Researchers conducting formal inquiry projects situated in the writing program, such as dissertations, may need to consult program archives and records in order to understand existing program policies and practices and their evolution. For projects such as these, impressionistic descriptions, anecdotal evidence, and oral histories are unlikely to provide sufficient data.

In addition, researchers from outside of the program who are studying teaching practices and faculty development may find useful information in our writing program archives. For example, older course materials may help researchers understand how teaching practices have changed—and the ways in which they have remained the same. Researchers constructing broadly based histories of the discipline and profession are likely to find a well-maintained writing program archive especially valuable.

Writing program archives may yield information valuable to researchers in other disciplines as well. Most first-year composition programs reflect the culture and history of the educational institutions in which they are located. The demographic description of the students either exempted from or required to complete a first-year course is likely to closely match the demographic description of the institution's entering class as a whole. Likewise, because of the

size of such programs, the institution's general personnel policies and hiring practices for graduate teaching assistants and adjuncts/part-time faculty are likely to be reflected in the personnel policies and practices of the writing program. Indeed, because of the large number of graduate teaching assistant and adjunct/part-time appointments made in the first-year writing program, the institution-wide policies may have been developed with this particular instructional staff in mind. Likewise, the Writing Across the Curriculum program may reflect much about the general campus culture and climate because it involves faculty, staff, and administrators from across the institution. Because the process of change in writing programs often involves participants from every level of institutional governance in discussion and decision making, a writing program's archives can provide records of interest to researchers examining the processes of institutional change. Writing program archives are needed by the writing program administration profession. As a profession, writing program administrators need to develop a collective memory, and archives can help serve that purpose (O'Toole 1990, 14). The historical research necessary for significant inquiry on writing program administration will depend upon the available archive (see Chapter 11). Developing an understanding of how the work of writing program administration has changed over time will require access to the historical records of particular writing programs located in specific institutional contexts. Archival research will help also in developing theories of writing program administration. For example, records preserved in program archives will be useful for constructing a theoretical model of writing program development. If we don't establish and maintain archives for our program, much of this needed research will not be possible because there are relatively few published or widely circulated detailed descriptions of programs and practices.

Why Do WPAs Need to Have Intellectual Control of Program Archives?

The project of establishing an archive presents an intellectual challenge. It is not merely an act of accumulating and filing documents; they also must be evaluated. The reflective work involved in evaluating records for archival significance is intellectually satisfying and valuable. Determining the value of program records requires informed and careful analysis, for archivists must be able to evaluate the significance of the records' source, their informational content, uniqueness, usability, and relationship to other records (Schellenberg 1956, 61). Thus, making judgments about the archival significance of writing program records draws on writing program administrators' professional expertise.

Evaluating the archival significance of writing program records requires an understanding of rhetorical principles and writing theory, an understanding of administrative practices and principles gained through experience as writ-

ing program administrators, and an understanding of the research interests of the field of composition studies in general. This expertise is necessary to determine both the primary values of archives (the values for the originating agency, for administrative, fiscal, legal, and operating purposes) and the secondary values of archival materials, including evidential value (evidence of the organization and functioning of the agency that produced the records) and informational value (their value for information on persons, places, subjects, and things other than the organization that created them).[1]

Elliott lists several "understandings" necessary to archivists that are shared by writing theorists and researchers: understanding of document-event relations (1985, 360); understanding that a document can have different functions at different times for different audiences (362); and understanding that the form of a text is determined by the conversant's need to express something *within a particular situation* (363). Writing program administrators' immersion in writing theory disposes them to agree that, as Samuels explains, "the integrated nature of society's institutions and its recorded documentation must be reflected in archivists' efforts to document those institutions" (1986, 112). Writing program administrators need to work with professional archivists in their institutions in order to coordinate efforts and benefit from their expertise in such areas as archival principles and standard practices. Professional archivists can advise us on when and how to apply traditional archival principles and concepts such as original order, provenance, the life cycle of a document, and authority control. Professional archivists also can help us understand and apply relevant information systems theory and assist us in applying organization theory to development of our records management and archival practices for our writing programs.

But we can't depend upon already overburdened and underfunded professional archivists at our institutions. Even in the most ideal of circumstances for qualified staffing and funding of program archives, writing program administrators need to participate actively in critical decision making about developing and maintaining their programs' archives. The extent to which we are involved in creating, developing, and maintaining our own archives determines the degree of intellectual control (as well as physical control) we will have over the record of our work. As archivists for our own programs, our knowledge of what records are in our collection, where they came from, and how they relate to one another gives us intellectual control of our program archives. Our knowledge of the location of materials and of how they can be retrieved gives us physical control. Given our intimate knowledge of our writing programs, we are optimally situated to meet the three primary objectives of archival programs identified by Kesner: identifying and selecting or collecting records for preservation; arranging and preserving these records; and insuring the records' accessibility by providing finding aids and reference services (1981, 101).

As O'Toole has suggested, anyone who works as an archivist must understand the reasons for recording information in the first place, the reasons for

saving information for long periods, the technology that supports records creation, and the characteristics and uses of recorded information (10). Given our overview of most of the activities of our programs, writing program administrators are well situated to become archivists for the writing programs. As the original creators of many of our programs' records, we know why and how they were developed, why they took the form they did, and what their continuing significance is likely to be. As creators and users of our programs' records, we can make informed judgments about the strengths, weaknesses, and potential future uses of records and analyze their long-term value (Schellenberger 1956, 59). In these ways, the work of establishing and maintaining a writing program archive is an intellectual task that draws on a writing program administrator's professional experience and engagement in disciplinary practices.

What Needs to Be Done to Establish a Writing Program Archive?

In order to develop an archives mission and goals statement that articulates the purpose and scope of the archive, writing program administrators make a number of informed and critical judgments. The WPA must determine the archival goals best suited to his or her particular writing program—the research goals it can serve especially well and/or the goals it can serve that won't be served by other archives.

In developing a mission and goals statement for the program archive, the WPA should consider the particular program's status. For example, the WPA must be able to identify the ways in which the writing program is a good representative example for an institution of its type. She must also know what makes the writing program unusual or unique and how, why and to what extent those unique elements can and should be documented. The WPA also must be able to evaluate her writing program's special strengths. Development of a goals statement for the program archive also requires that the WPA be able to define the role of the archive in the larger institutional context—within the department, school/college, and university. The WPA must draw on disciplinary and professional expertise as well as detailed knowledge of the program and its institutional context in order to identify who is likely to use the program archive for what purposes.

Developing an acquisitions policy and plan that is appropriate for the program archive will depend upon the WPA/archivist's knowledge and understanding of the program's institutional context. Without this knowledge and understanding, the WPA will not be able to realistically evaluate the resources available for the archive. She will need to know whether any monetary resources are currently available for acquiring and maintaining archival records related to the writing program and be able to identify potential sources of additional support. The WPA also must be able to determine which human resources are available for developing the program archive. Not only must she

know who has expertise that can be tapped, the WPA must be able to identify ways in which other program participants contribute to the records management and archiving program. The WPA must be able to evaluate the potential contributions of teaching staff, clerical staff, and others with administrative responsibilities in the program. She must know which program participants are in a position to help with negotiations for resources.

The WPA/archivist draws on disciplinary expertise and professional experience in determining the focus and scope of acquisitions for the program archive. This knowledge guides her in determining priority subjects for acquisitions and the types of material most likely to provide relevant information: e.g., Will student work be retained? Will all instructional materials be retained or only a sample? Familiarity with the field of composition studies enables the WPA to identify sources of essential documents and other already existing collections that might be incorporated. To choose an appropriate focus for the program archive, a WPA must understand how research is conducted in composition studies and be able to identify (even predict)[2] the research interests of the field. While the research methodology of a project determines the records the researcher will seek, the records available will determine the ultimate choice of methodology.

The WPA as archivist must be able to anticipate potential local research interests and projects and predict needs for particular program data or records in order to make sound acquisitions decisions. The writing program administrator must understand how information is circulated and disseminated in the field of composition studies in order to develop policies for acquiring materials. For example, she will have to consider whether writing program participants can or should be required to deposit copies of conference presentations and publications that contain descriptions, evaluations, or other representations of various aspects of the writing program. She also will need to be aware of any intellectual property issues such a policy might raise.

WPAs need not rely on traditional archival methods, which collect records after the fact. Because they understand writing practices, WPAs can develop effective plans for documenting program activities and practices prior to the creation of records. These plans, known as "documentation strategies" among professional archivists, involve records creators and users as well as records managers in decision making about what documents should be created as well as which should be preserved (see Hackman and Warnow-Blewitt 1987). When a writing program begins the process of considering, designing, adopting, implementing, and eventually assessing an innovation or development—say a new writing course or a new staff recruiting policy—plans should be made for documenting that process. For example, a documentation strategy for the development of a new course might include some of the following: measures for archiving related informal e-mail exchanges among program participants, tracking of successive drafts of course proposals, and retaining minutes from meetings of committees and other groups authorized to review the course

proposal. Plans might also be made to retain records of staffing, copies of syllabi, and samples of student work once the course has been taught. The key elements of documentation strategies are that decisions are made collaboratively by participants (records creators and users); they are made in advance; and they are regularly reviewed.

Effective documentation strategies contribute to developing a sound records management program for current records while they are being created and used. Emmerson explains that records management involves "the development of a program to control records throughout their life from creation to ultimate disposal, either as waste paper or as an addition to the archives of the creating organization" (1989, 7). A good records management program simplifies the identification and organization of potentially archival materials and informs effective critical judgments when evaluating records for archival significance. Writing program administrators may consult records management professionals for advice and direction in choosing appropriate information systems for creating, organizing, and retrieving program documents; and they may rely on clerical staff for maintaining program records; but WPAs themselves must be able to make the critical judgments necessary to establishing a records management system that serves the specific activities and needs of the writing program.

Apart from its potential contribution to maintaining the program archive, a good records management program is essential in the day-to-day administration of the writing program. Effective records management improves access to important program documents, which increases the efficiency of the records users and makes the information vital to informed decisions easily available. Developing this records management system for a writing program involves an analytical process that is enhanced by the WPA's understanding of writing theory. Solid grounding in writing theory enables a writing program administrator to identify significant multiple authors, audiences, contexts, and purposes for a record. This awareness of theoretical issues and familiarity with program practices is necessary to accurately identify and inventory current records; to analyze the significance and uses of these records; and, if needed, to reorganize the records by reordering files, reclassifying items, eliminating duplication, reformatting information, and developing a plan for collecting necessary records not currently in the files.

The writing program administrator's situated knowledge enables her to determine the lifecycle of each records group, providing the expertise needed for critically analyzing the rhetorical situation at each stage of the document's life—creation, use, storage, and disposition. Writing program administrators must understand current program practices as well as predict possible future directions of the program in order to develop a records retention schedule based on an accurate assessment of the frequency of use (see Coles 1991). This assessment requires the WPA to make the following critical determinations: the length of time each records group should remain in active status (regularly

referred to or used); the point at which a records group should be moved to semi-active status (not used regularly but important for administrative, legal, or fiscal purposes); and the point at which a records group should be moved to inactive status (no longer needed for any reason other than research).

The WPA's assessment will determine the ultimate disposition of the records—whether they are retained for placement in the program archives or discarded either by shredding if the records contain confidential information or by recycling. Because a case conceivably can be made for saving virtually any record, the archivist's selection standards are critical, not self-evident or routine. Saving everything is not an informed decision. Even if doing so were physically possible using electronic formats, the program archivist must ensure the possibility of future retrieval (risky, given frequent changes in electronic formats) and accessibility to future users. In order to understand how the technology of communication and documentation affect administrative policy and practice, the writing program administrator/archivist must be aware of special concerns related to electronic records, especially issues of preservation, alteration, and access[3] to digitized information such as documents on disks, e-mail correspondence, discussions on the writing program's electronic list(s), and various iterations of the writing program website. Furthermore, as Hugh Taylor (1988) argues, the archivist must understand the "cultural impact" of technology on users (including the archivist herself).

Writing program administrators draw on their knowledge of the broad field of writing research in order to meet their responsibility to make the archive accessible to users. The administrator/archivist is expected to make politically informed decisions in developing a plan for providing access to the writing program archives, determining who will have primary responsibility for maintaining the archive in an accessible condition, who will be granted access, and whether restrictions of access will be necessary for any materials. The administrator/archivist must also ensure that archive contents are described consistently, accurately, and in sufficient detail so that researchers are able to locate documents relevant to their projects. To do this requires that the archivist have both the discipline-wide and program-specific knowledge necessary to analyze the records and anticipate their potential for research.

Writing program administrators draw on their writing expertise to document their archival procedures. Hackman and Warnow-Blewitt claim that "the effective and efficient identification and selection of archival documentation is the heart of archival work" (47). This is intellectually challenging and satisfying work for WPAs because our engagement with theories of written discourse enables us to contribute to issues under discussion among professional archivists. Frank Burke (1980) has identified several of these issues: Why does a society create the records it does? Do records establish facts or interpret facts? What role do records play in the decision-making process of managing and operating a corporate body? How does the decision-making process affect documentation?

Why Don't We Already Have Program Archives?

Considering the benefits of establishing, maintaining, and consulting writing program archives I have discussed here—the archives' usefulness to writing program administrators and researchers—why do WPAs sometimes choose not to spend time on and in their program archives? Maynard Brichford of the Society of American Archivists says, "the value of archives is wholly dependent upon the existence of persons attaching value to them" (1977, 9). Do we value the work our program records document? If so, we will value the records that document the intellectual work of writing program administration enough to establish and maintain program archives.

One reason for a lack of attention to program archives may be a lack of interest in what went on in the program's past. As professional WPAs, we grant and garner more attention and rewards to efforts at innovation than to efforts at preservation. It's easier to get attention for doing something new and different than to get recognition for making an informed decision to preserve an effective writing program practice. An administrator who is new to a writing program may lack faith in the usability, accuracy, or comprehensiveness of program records from previous administrations. Or the new administrator may consider disposal of old records an eloquent and gratifying symbolic gesture for choosing new direction for the writing program.

Some WPAs may lack access to the program's archival materials. For various reasons, records may not have been retained: There may not have been adequate, accessible space available for retaining records; records may have been discarded unintentionally; or records may be safely stored somewhere although no one currently involved in the writing program is aware of their existence. Failure to retain program records in an accessible location contributes to the view that our work is transient and unworthy of preservation.

Writing program administrators may lack the resources of time and money necessary to maintaining a program archive. However, because allocation of resources reflects institutional priorities, lack of support for program archives may simply be another way of describing lack of interest or failure to value the writing program enough to preserve a record of its activities.

Steps to Valuing Our Histories of Institutional Change

Writing program administrators can take some actions calculated to challenge and revise such an attitude.

1. We can make certain that the responsibility for managing and archiving program records is recognized in our official job descriptions, and we can negotiate for resources to support this work at the time of appointment and reappointment.
2. We can and should involve other program participants—teachers, cleri-

cal staff, other members of administrative staff—in our collection projects and documentation strategies.

3. As a professional collective, we can develop guidelines and standard practices for managing and archiving writing program records. This will not only make sharing and comparing information among programs and institutions more efficient and reliable, it will support more extensive research on writing, writing program administration, and institutional change.
4. We can work together to develop a broad-based, inter-institutional documentation strategy for writing program administration—perhaps under the auspices of the Council of Writing Program Administrators.

Developing writing program archives is a symbolically significant project for writing program administrators, both individually and collectively. The very existence of an archive makes a claim for the importance of the work it documents.

Notes

1. These definitions of *primary, secondary, evidential,* and *informational values* for archives have been taken from Schellenberg (1965).

2. Miller notes that the process of appraisal is in large degree a process of prediction (1986, 389).

3. See Mayer's (1988) discussion of issues of survival and alterability of computer records.

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10

WPAs as Historians

Discovering a First-Year Writing Program by Researching Its Past

Ruth M. Mirtz

When I first became a WPA seven years ago, I did not think of the role as one of researcher, let alone historian. Even though I argued in a qualifying examination during my graduate work that compositionists must know their history, I was thinking of the comprehensive history of writing instruction, the general trends that reflected changes in social and cultural histories that in turn influenced composition theory. I didn't realize that the maxim "know your history" also applied, perhaps more profoundly for a WPA, to knowing your local history, the history of your own writing program.

My need as a WPA to know local history struck me as I sat in the special collections room of the library at Florida State University, reading page after page of Faculty Senate minutes from the late '70s and early '80s, looking for any reference to English placement policies. I am not a historian and was not trained in research methods of historians. Yet that day in the library, I knew I was acting as a historian, sifting through five years' worth of the minutiae of university policies and hypothesizing about what lay between the lines of the two or three references I eventually found. Also, I mused about the context of university politics in which those few references were embedded.

This chapter describes one of the specialized kinds of research a WPA does and how it helps a WPA develop or discover an identity for a first year writing program: investigation into the history and rationales for previous policies and practices within one's own institution. Two recent research projects I have undertaken recently at Florida State University demonstrate how WPAs' work can unexpectedly, but quite productively, turn into the work of a historical researcher. One project involved a revision to the mentoring process for new teaching assistants but had to take into account a long pattern in the past thirty

years of mentoring in the English department. In the case of this project, the intra-institutional research resulted in a historical narrative that closely reflected the changes in the field of composition studies nationwide and that gives my program a normative identity within a disciplinary perspective. However, a second project, which involved a change in our placement system, arrived as a single clue that spun into a series of leads and dead-ends and that more closely followed the logical fact-finding of a detective, merging the work of five different areas of the university (computing support, evaluation services, undergraduate studies, the writing center, the dean of faculties office). This second project gives the program another part of its identity that is local, crisis-oriented, and related to the political climate in Florida in the '70s. Both projects exemplify the ends and means of WPA research: The connections among the literacy goals and knowledge-making goals, and the administrative historical inquiry that may not produce widely published "findings" but applies its conclusions to the definition and work of a particular first-year writing program.

Historical Methodology for WPAs

Historical methodology in composition research as described by Robert J.Connors bears a strong resemblance to the historical detective work of WPAs. For instance, the material or "data" a historian consults are "made up of at least these three elements: the historian's perceptions of the present, her assemblage of claims based on study of materials from the past, and an ongoing internal dialogue about cultural preconceptions and prejudices and the historian's own" (Connors 1992, 15). Intra-institutional research is similar to this historical methodology in many ways: searching personal memories of older faculty members, storage closets, archives, faculty senate records, registration records, written departmental and institutional histories, student files, hiring records. However, a WPA must consult her own version of the present as she searches for information, must gather materials from the past for analysis, and must acknowledge her own prejudices about the past as well as those of previous administrators who may no longer be present or involved.

Yet, a WPA's goals for conducting historical inquiry are likely to be quite different from those of many historians. A WPA is unlikely to have time to delve, simply out of disinterested curiosity, into an indepth study of the origins of policies and procedures she has inherited, especially those that can't be explained orally by faculty members or by documentation close at hand. Because such local historical research probably would not result in publications recognized by conventional evaluation processes and because too many WPAs are untenured and must concentrate on national publication, elective local historical research is unlikely to be a WPA's top priority. Yet, it's exactly when people *don't* remember and there is *no* handy documentation that a WPA is likely to need to solve a problem by historical research methods.

Because WPAs are less likely to have time and motivation to conduct historical inquiry, they also are less concerned about traditional goals of historical research, certainly less interested in history for history's sake. A historical narrative pointing out cause and effect and projecting influences on present circumstances, producing merely one possible explanation of events, is rarely the goal of a WPA doing historical intra-institutional research. The WPA is more likely to ask, "Who did what, where, and when?" in order to determine that "I can (or can't) do this, here and now." Connors asserts that there is no absolute predictive power in historical narrative: "Any attempt to make history predictive would have to assume that there are dependable recurring circumstances, which is simply not the case. In fact, history is narrative, and every attempt to create a system to give that narrative a predictive meaning is fraught with peril" (1992, 31). However, a WPA might look for predictive historical narrative: How it was done in the past is exactly relevant to how it might be changed in the present and informs decisions about what actions can be taken.

Placing this kind of research, as described in the following two examples, squarely in the context of historical research gives a WPA at least two advantages: 1) the advantage of a methodology which allows her to avoid mistakes and useless wanderings by learning from the experience of other historians; and 2) the advantage of being able to describe her work to non-WPAs in terms that they may more readily accept. In other words, if we as WPAs are truly doing something similar to what other historians do, and because we know historians and historical study are rewarded in the academy, we should use it to our advantage.

If the goals of traditional historical research seem too far removed from our work as WPAs, consider the more interpretive and contextual version of historical research promoted by Margaret Strain (1993) as a "hermeneutical" model of writing history. Strain says that the field of composition studies has produced a number of history studies in part "to identify itself as a professional community that regards the teaching of writing as a serious endeavor" (1993, 217). But she sees some of those history studies as lacking: "The result [of taking a teleological and linear view] is a view of composition history which often glosses over composition's politicized and ideologically grounded influences, neutralizing their powers and at times, omitting them entirely from received narratives" (218). Strain's desire for a hermeneutic model is not an option for WPAs but a necessity. When we are forced to make judgments and to develop policies with no rationale for the old policies, with too few facts, and sometimes without documentation, we have to rely on what Strain describes as "skilled readings" and "traces" (220) which connect information from other programs, theories, speculations, and educated guesses. A hermeneutic model of history gives us permission to conduct research where we have to do a lot with very little and to conduct research when we must fill in many blanks with what we know from events outside the documentary materials.

Example One: The Accidental Detective

The first case involves the accidental discovery of graduate student files from Florida State University from the 1960s. As I was waiting outside the office of the English Department's academic coordinator, I decided to see what was in the boxes that had been sitting in the hallway for the last twelve months: old graduate student files, waiting to be taken to storage or thrown away. I probably invaded the privacy of these graduate students, but at the moment I was simply interested in the difference between the graduate experience in the '60s and the graduate experience in the late '90s. The most stunning difference I noticed, as I skimmed through five or six files, was in the written teaching evaluations of the graduate teaching assistants: In the '60s, not only did senior faculty members mentor and evaluate all the teaching assistants, they did so in what we would now recognize as sexist, agist, and elitist ways, in brief and almost entirely critical modes. The concept of "teaching assistant" in the '60s at Florida State was, judging from the evaluation letters, a sink-or-swim proposition. You entered as a good teacher; or you figured it out on your own, in the classroom; or you soon decided you were in the wrong profession. Even the senior faculty recognized that this situation was unacceptable, and Florida State's tradition of strong, proactive teacher training for teaching assistants started in the late 1960s, shortly after these letters were written.

Today, teaching assistants are mentored and evaluated by fellow teaching assistants in more formative, more detailed, and more observational modes, in letters directed more to the teaching assistants than to their supervisors. However, even though in the old letters I instantly recognized the productive change from summative critique to formative and supportive feedback, I realized later that the letters told me that full faculty members had once taken on the duty of mentoring teaching assistants and had taken the duty quite seriously. This was a fact no one had seen reason to tell me. Was the present mentoring program the "improvement" I'd been told it was or was it part of the gradual and complete removal of the faculty from the first-year writing program? Some of both, I now think, as I remember Connors' admonition not to assume that change over time is always progressive just because it is linear. Our downfall as historians, Connors points out, is assuming that anything that happened in the past was less effective than what we do in the present and viewing the past as the mistake that the present corrects (1992, 15). Those letters gave me a new perspective as an administrator of a first-year composition program. The beginning of the teaching assistant (TA) training program at Florida State University (FSU) was entirely an oral history at this point, just one version of the history of the first year writing program, until I discovered the graduate files.

Another "accidental" discovery was a history of the English Department, written in 1988 by a graduate student for the departmental newsletter (now de-

funct). During FSU's fiftieth anniversary celebration in 1997, a faculty member put together a panel of English alumni, which I attended, and at which I found a stack of reprints of the newsletter containing the English Department history. The article is four pages long and mentions the first-year writing program as a "major accomplishment" although the paragraph describes only the teaching assistant training program as it was developed in the late '60s (Hassall 1988, 3).

These two documents tell me where the history of our first-year writing program clearly reflects the trends of writing programs across the country, as described in accounts of the past thirty years of composition studies, and where our program varies. FSU's first-year writing program "fits" the general movements of English faculty toward research and literature and away from service courses such as composition, the increasing use of poorly trained and supervised teaching assistants to teach service courses and yet provide a need for graduate courses for faculty to teach. In some lights, it appears that FSU's first-year writing program broke away from general trends when a small cadre of faculty actively sought to hire specialists in teaching and writing to help teaching assistants excel in their duties and to provide a quality education to undergraduate students. However, at the same time the one-on-one mentoring of teaching assistants as a departmental duty moved first from full faculty participation to the WPA as sole mentor, then to temporary instructors, and most recently to (starting in 1998) no mentoring at all.

Although such accidental discoveries themselves are not research, what we do with them is. Study and interpretation of such materials is crucial when there are so few materials. The benign neglect that many first-year writing programs experience with untenured or non-tenure track faculty (often with no particular allegiance to writing instruction) in charge, means that there may be very few documents about the program. Without a full and rich archive of past materials, every document that does exist about the first-year writing program in the past has to be examined for how it describes and inscribes the program in the department and university. Every document needs several of the alternative readings Strain suggests; it must be balanced against the oral histories of the writing program, it must be examined in the context of other factors such as the perceived duty of the departmental historian, which was to tell a brief, public relations version of the department. In the case of FSU, the continual references to the first-year writing program as a teacher training ground, rather than a student learning ground, go a long way toward explaining why student placement into remedial classes went relatively unnoticed for years (see Example Two). So, even though we have a nationally recognized extensive training program for new teaching assistants, that program is the result of a typical historical narrative in which English departments move teacher preparation activities farther away from research activities and into the hands of the untenured, the part-time, and the temporary members of the department (see Miller [1991] and Connors [1991] for two of these narratives).

Example Two: Reconstructing History Through Research

In an attempt to revise a required placement examination, which was incorrectly placing about 150 students into remedial and preparatory composition each year, the Director of the Reading/Writing Center, Dr. Carrie Leverenz, and I needed to find out how the requirement was started in the first place. The logical first step would have been to search the First-Year Writing Program archives for documents explaining the reasoning behind and the events leading up to such a major policy. However, there were no archives or stored files. The second step was to ask the previous three directors of First-Year Writing and the previous two directors of the Reading/Writing Center what they knew. None of them remembered anything substantial.

The third step was to contact the director of the campus testing service, who supervised the administration of the exam and printing the exam reports. This interview yielded the first of only two documents I ever found about the exam: a memo with a list of exam dates and times, procedures for scoring and publishing the results of the exam, and ways to change two questions in order to use the university's standard scoring sheets. Handwritten at the bottom of the memo is the exam cutoff score. The director of the testing service gave me a copy of the test and a copy of the memo. We discussed what action needed to take place if we decided to change the cutoff score.

At first glance the memo was not helpful. Although it named the chair of the English department, the director of Freshman Composition, and the dean of undergraduate studies, it did not tell me who had chosen the test or who had decided to implement it. What it did tell me was the state of flux the Freshman Composition program might have been in: One line refers to the fact that the cutoff score had not been determined because the chair of the English department was out of town and the "new Chairman of Freshman Comp. does not feel experienced enough to make this decision." Thus, the note at the bottom about the cutoff score obviously was phoned in later. Below the handwritten cutoff score is the name and phone number of the director of the Reading/Writing "laboratory" as it was called in 1982. Another line in the document tells me about the relative ignorance of all parties about what the exam was going to accomplish: "There is no way possible to estimate the number of students that will take the test." Not knowing how many students would need or want to take the test, added to the fact that this document names no one in charge, suggested to me that the exam was known by all parties to be a less than perfect decision, but probably served as an emergency measure. As Louise Wetherbee Phelps explains the "institutional logic" of writing programs, "It is therefore of enormous significance to writing programs that the institutions housing them are in crises. There is not really a single crisis, but many specific ones affecting different kinds of institutions" (1991, 160). This

placement exam was apparently a stopgap solution to a specific crisis, implemented with many good intentions but not much attention.

I should mention the embarrassment this portion of my research created, a situation that possibly only WPAs doing intra-institutional research might experience (at least I've never heard of a historian being embarrassed by what she found). The exam, which I didn't know was being given every summer to 200–300 students until three years into my work as WPA, was written in 1969, and had all the problems that one might expect in a multiple choice grammar and usage test written in the '60s. Although I had no part in the decision to use this exam, it was being given under "my watch" to students I was advising and students being taught by teachers I supervised and evaluated. My objective search for information became colored by real questions about the roles of former and present WPAs: How had this placement procedure fallen through the cracks like this? How had we lost our institutional knowledge about this placement procedure?

I still thought there should be documentation of some official action that was taken in order to put a placement test in place, so I consulted the minutes of the Faculty Senate, the faculty governing body at FSU. After calling three offices, I found a complete copy of the minutes at the library, in the special collections, where they had to be manually retrieved by librarians from storage and could be read only in the special collections room.

When I realized I only had the date of the cutoff score memo to go on, I made what experienced historians probably think of as a rookie's mistake: I looked in the Faculty Senate minutes *preceding* the date of the memo, thinking the official action would have taken place before the exam would have been first given. However, after much searching, I found that the official action was taken in the Faculty Senate a month *after* the date of the memo. I eventually found the minutes of the meeting where the Faculty Senate voted to institute the placement exam. Here's the complete text, the only text I could find about the placement exam:

> Unless a Freshman entering in the Fall 1982 has a verbal score on the SAT greater than 390 OR an ACT English score greater than 16, that student will be required to register for ENC 1020 (one hour) and ENC 1021 (two hours) Reading/Writing Laboratory during Fall semester. Such a student will not be allowed to register for ENC 1101 during the Fall.
>
> In addition: Students required to register for ENC 1020 and ENC 1021 during Fall 1982, by reason of their scores on SAT/ACT, will be offered the option of taking the College English Placement Test, part one, during orientation week and the drop-add period for the purpose of establishing their potential for entering ENC 1101 in the Fall. (Faculty Senate Minutes, September 15, 1982, 2.)

The interpretation-resistant prose style of the Faculty Senate Minutes gave me very little information.

Moving in a different direction, I continued to work with the campus testing service to establish some statistical trends in the past exam results: Were more students taking the exam? Were a higher percentage of students failing the exam? The campus testing service would only offer me a diskette with the data in a statistical computer program that no one in the English Department had ever heard of. I made an appointment with a computer specialist at the academic computing service, carried the diskette to her, waited while she ran the data through the program, explained what information I needed and in what form, and waited again as she printed the reports. I suppose this step was essentially the same as a historian finding a written document in another language and having to find a translator in order to study the document. In a sense, I was creating a new document, which represented past information, but in a useable form: another form of historical narration, a list of numbers and names which told me the effect and influence of the placement test on the lives of our students.

In addition, Carrie Leverenz had been collecting information for two years on the assessment of these students by more qualitative measures—the opinions of teachers who regularly taught both remedial and non-remedial first-year writing students. Here we were in more familiar territory, working with teachers and students face-to-face, discussing criteria, creating new categories, allowing for known and knowable variables. We also could consult a reliable and extensive body of disciplinary knowledge about assessment and placement.

In the end, after all this research (and I have left out a few wild goose chases down blind alleys) Carrie Leverenz and I wrote a one-page memo to our chair, briefly outlining why we wanted to change the cutoff test score, our intentions to revise the placement procedure entirely in the next year, and what we thought were the projected changes needed in staffing to accommodate the change. However, the generic constraints of the memo did not allow the details of our research to be visible.

Carrie and I knew the answer to the major question (What's a better placement procedure for our students?) before we started this project. We didn't know the answers to several other questions (Why do we have this placement procedure? Who put this placement procedure into place? Who has the authority to change the placement procedure?). From my research, I found partial answers to those questions, enough for Carrie and me to continue with our plans to change the placement procedure. But the fully-contextualized story of what was happening to the student body, of what the attitudes toward SAT/ACT scores were by the Faculty Senate, of who made the original recommendations for remedial placement, and so on, remains a mystery.

The lesson from analyzing these few documents as historical material is a familiar lesson to many other first-year writing program directors at large research universities. When does a set of required courses become a program: Is it when a written history is possible? Is it when archives are not merely a convenience but a necessity? Is it when a series of events in the past mark a diver-

gence in practice and theory? In FSU's case, the first-year composition program did not speak of itself as a program until the first writing specialist, Wendy Bishop, became the director of the program and changed the name from "Freshman English" to "First-Year Writing Program."

What I can now call a historically-based understanding about my department's placement procedures is verified in at least one way. In "Writing Assessment in Florida: A Reminiscence," Gordon Brossell describes the state of Florida's "reputation as a national leader in testing," beginning in the late '70s, which evolved more from "the state's sheer enthusiasm for testing than from the effectiveness, quality, or design of Florida's programs" (1996, 25). Later in the article, Brossell describes Florida's testing programs as "idiosyncratic" and unwilling to respond to the changes in composition teaching and strategies: "Conceptually, the effect in Florida has been to segregate writing assessment from writing pedagogy" (27). While Brossell focuses on the College-Level Academic Skills Test (CLAST), I can see, given this leadership in assessment practices, why past WPAs in FSU's English Department, especially in the climate of the late '70s and early '80s, would have enacted a quantitative placement process and tried to forget about it at soon as possible. The literal politics and the tacit ideologies of a legislature and an educational system, over a space of three decades, probably had as much to do with the forgotten exam as any local crises.

The forgotten exam and the relatively fruitless research to explain it has become emblematic for me. The research helps me see in new ways the conflicting agendas of the WPA and the department, which I now understand as less personal and more historically entrenched.

Seeing WPA Work as Historical Research

My department may be an exception in its failure to keep any archives, departmental meeting minutes, or paper work about its first-year writing program, but I'm sure at least a few other departments are as shortsighted. As Shirley Rose argues in Chapter 9, the state of a program's archives are an indication of the value of the program to those running it. The lack of archives or a paper trail about the first-year writing program at FSU means, in part, that the directors were assuming a progressive accumulation of policies—that everything always got better. Why keep records or remember key events when they were, of course, obsolete and when what replaced them was something more effective? Previous directors probably had little sense of a writing program as a historically embedded product of multiple layers of bureaucracy. Without a historical perspective as WPAs, we don't see collecting and interrogating history as a part of the research necessary to our jobs.

Also, we know that it is the crush of work, the burden of too much to do in too little time, that creates the attitude of "let's just solve this problem and move on." The use of untenured assistant professors as WPAs is generally referred to

as a practice that exploits the untenured professor, but it also keeps a first-year writing program in a state of unhistoricized flux. In "Using the History of Rhetoric" Richard Lloyd-Jones describes the dilemma of many WPAs: "The here-and-now formula is, alas, only for here-and-now, but this afternoon something is different from what happened in the morning. . . . That was practical in a gross world where subtle distinctions are irrelevant and time is short, but it invited one to ignore change, to overgeneralize. . . . The historians, as I now understand them, are people who collect 'other ways' tried in other times" (1993, 23).

In my own work as a WPA, the paper trail has seemed important only as long as I have filing cabinet space to hold it; the concept of archiving never came to bear on me until this project. Without tenured, experienced WPAs who have a long-term investment in a writing program and are grounded in composition theory, the history of writing instruction, and the local history of their first-year writing program, there is little hope that archives will be maintained or used to help provide a stronger identity for the program itself and the position of the WPA. We wouldn't have to rely so completely on hermeneutical "traces" if we had the rich and complete archives that can exist when WPAs are tenured and experienced, rather than burnt-out and unrewarded.

At first I resented the work I was doing as a historian. I didn't see its connection to the politics of composition and its contribution to the identity of the first-year writing program at FSU. Why should I sit in the special collections in the library and plow through ten years worth of Faculty Senate Minutes when I could just as well blunder and bluster my way through the placement exam problem? I believe WPAs could overcome some of this resistance by remembering how, in other areas, they connect their WPA work to their teaching and research. Historical research is at least a little like the detective work that teachers do, conferencing with students, ferreting out the reasons why, inducing general facts from specific data, looking for patterns in errors, and so on. Edward Corbett writes that as teachers we should not "fall into the delusion that every morning presents us with a brand new world" and therefore we need to "maintain our contact with history, . . . record the history we are making in our classrooms, . . . [and] pass on our heritage to subsequent generations of teachers and students" (1990, 31). If we take that advice as WPAs, we will write more accounts of how our writing program originated (and fewer accounts of what we do now without the context of the past included).

The important step to take toward writing those accounts is to continue from the answer to the immediate problem we just researched, to the historical narrative that defines our writing programs. Placing this kind of work in the context of historical research can help us realize what we are doing beyond solving a problem, which only makes our work as WPAs more important, not less. A second step is to persuade our colleagues that a WPA's historical research on the writing program must count as research, even if unpublished. Ernest Boyer's (1990) four types of scholarship (discovery, integration, application, and teaching) all apply to historical intra-institutional research of a

WPA. In Example Two, for instance, Carrie Leverenz and I produced new information by calculating, computing, and measuring past and present student performance, which was comparable only by understanding the rationale for the measurements in the past. We integrated our discoveries with past policies and contemporary scholarship to produce a new analysis of what kind of placement procedure was appropriate and how to implement it. We continue to apply the knowledge as we develop the new testing procedures (a written test scored holistically), and as we apply our new understanding of the first-year writing program to our strategies to maintain the program. We have taught ourselves; I hope, through this chapter, to teach others about how history, identity, and literacy work for and against each other.

Conclusion

One of the values of intra-institutional historical research is in program definition and identity, which can place the WPA in a stronger position, as a conceiver rather than just an inheritor of a set of courses. We have to see it as a gain in power through knowledge. In a recent article, Lisa Ede ponders the methodology of composition studies, asking "How should we conceive of—and enact—the relationship between theory and practice, between our multidisciplinary discipline's two related goals: the production of knowledge and the advancement of literacy? Similarly, how should we view the relationship between our experience . . . and the work we produce?" (1992, 314). These are also vital questions for WPAs who spend significant amounts of time in unrewarded and unrecognized administrative research, including the kind of historical research described here. Much of the work of a WPA, just as the work of teacher-researchers, is situated at exactly the crossroads Ede describes, where the modes and results of the production of knowledge directly impact the advancement of literacy at the college level, and where the goals of literacy education also directly impact the kinds of knowledge produced and disseminated—where the history, as much as the current leadership, of first-year writing makes it possible to "forget" a placement exam and to "lose" a mentoring program.

A first-year writing program *is* its history. If a placement policy can not be located as a historical event, as it couldn't at FSU without extensive research, it can be forgotten, and so can the students whose lives and literacy are affected by the results of the placement policies. When no one sees the history of our mentoring program as a series of reductions and erosions because they can't see past the present crisis, they also are not seeing the impact of the mentoring program on the quality of education our department provides for its students. Nor can they see that its loss disrupts the experience-based knowledge making that happens between experienced and inexperienced teachers. Knowing our histories is one power a WPA can develop and wield to confront ahistorical identities and false narratives. Historical research by WPAs can, by

plotting the intersection of knowledge making, literacy, and history, redefine a first-year writing program. In addition to our many other knowledge-making roles, WPAs must be historians and archivists.

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11

Finding Ourselves in the Past

An Argument for Historical Work on WPAs

Barbara L'Eplattenier

In the Rhetoric and Composition graduate program I attended at Purdue University, the majority of female professors with whom I studied held administrative appointments in addition to their teaching and research duties. They efficiently, effectively, and with little fanfare, developed and sustained programs that have achieved national prominence: the Writing Lab, the Technical Writing program, the First-Year Writing program, the Rhetoric and Composition graduate program.

While these professors served as evidence and examples of the roles women play in composition, little in my coursework acknowledged women's historical presence. A development of Rhetoric course explored the "great men" whose thinking and writing influenced composition studies while a Gender and Composition course examined the feminization of composition. My own research found little to supplement these readings; indeed, I was often led back to my original coursework. As I reflected on these two courses and watched the women working around me, I became convinced of the need for a history that focused on writing program administration and the historical predecessors of female administrators. To know the past, these contemporary women could draw only on memory and the lore and stories that inevitably circulate within departments and academic fields. Their predecessors' work, when viewed against the available historical backdrop of Rhetoric and Composition, did not appear. Rather, historical work has focused on two broadly construed areas: the national trends that have influenced the field and the pedagogical practices of specific teachers.

Historians in Rhetoric and Composition have examined in great depth the pedagogical and ideological trends and influences, either positive or negative, of those who have taught writing. Of utmost importance to the field was the publication of James Berlin's *Writing Instruction in Nineteenth-Century Ameri-*

can Colleges (1984) and *Rhetoric and Reality: Writing Instruction in American Colleges, 1900–1985* (1987a). Using Albert Kitzhaber's 1953 dissertation "Rhetoric in American Colleges 1850–1900" as a major source, Berlin's *Writing Instruction* classifies rhetorical instruction into three traditions based upon ideology: the classical, psychological–epistemological, and romantic. *Rhetoric and Reality* continues to divide theories of rhetoric by epistemology. Other histories such as Nan Johnson's *Nineteenth-Century Rhetoric in North America* (1991); Sharon Crowley's *The Methodical Memory: Invention in Current-Traditional Rhetoric* (1990); John Michael Wozniak's *English Composition in Eastern Colleges, 1850–1940* (1978), and S. Michael Halloran's "From Rhetoric to Composition: The Teaching of Writing in America to 1900" (1990) also trace pedagogical trends—through textbooks, classroom material, or teachers—of the nineteenth and twentieth century.[1]

The second area of historical examination, individual classroom practices, has focused on men and "notable" women who were rhetoricians or on the pedagogical aspect of these teachers' lives (Lerner 1979). Gertrude Buck and her theory of organic rhetoric have been explored in great detail (Abordonado 1993; Vivian 1992; Koch 1992; Conway 1988; Mulderig 1984; Stewart 1993; Campbell 1989, 1996). Other studied notables include Claire Stevens who taught at Mount Holyoke during 1897 and 1904 (Smith 1996) and Mary Augusta Jordon, a contemporary of Buck's, who taught at Smith College (Wagner 1995). Donald Stewart has done extensive exploration of Fred Newton Scott and his program at Ann Arbor and its relationship to the work of Child and Kittredge at Harvard (1978; 1979; 1982; 1985; 1992; 1993; Stewart and Stewart 1997). In addition to his archival work (*The Origins of Composition Studies in the American College, 1875–1925*, 1995), John Brereton explored the pedagogy and textbooks of John Mathews Manly who taught at Brown and University of Chicago and Norman Foerster who taught at North Carolina and Iowa (1988).

As my opening story in the first two paragraphs notes, historical work in Rhetoric and Composition has, for the most part, ignored the administrative aspects of writing programs—the local institutional, political, and fiscal battles that surround beginning writing courses. One major contributing factor is that writing program administration was—and often still is—invisible. Edward Corbett, in "A History of Writing Program Administration" (1993), argues that writing program administration as we know it today did not start until the late '40s when thousands of veterans entered college on the GI bill. He writes:

> I have been unable to discover from my readings whether early in this century any college English departments in America had such a position as the now familiar director of freshman English. I suspect that in the 1920s, the 1930s and the first half of the 1940s the composition program was such a relatively small operation in our colleges and universities that . . . some factotum [sic] in the department could run the program out of his or her back pocket. (63)

As a result of this belief, Corbett focuses on the changes in writing program administration that he personally observed during his long and distinguished career. It is easy to understand why he does this: Data and artifacts about administrative work, such as reports, memos, and explanations of decisions, are not as readily apparent or available to historians as are textbooks or student papers—themselves difficult artifacts to find. I believe this to be one reason a history that focuses exclusively on writing program administration has not been undertaken. Additional difficulties lie in the fact that administrative negotiation often occurs in conversations in casual settings, outside of the bounds of official meetings; such discussions are not recorded or are only superficially addressed in "official" documentation.[2] Other complicating factors in constructing such histories include the number of people, visible and hidden, involved in administrative work; the sometimes false "lore" that surrounds programmatic decision making; and the temporal and fleeting nature of administrative decisions, as the many participants of the WPA listserv can attest. However, these difficulties should not deter us from exploring the administrative work involved in writing programs.[3] Rather, as Ruth Mirtz notes in Chapter 10, they should remind us that the histories we create are skilled readings, speculations, and traces "which connect information from other programs, theories, speculations, and educated guesses."

Two factors argue for the pre-1940s existence of people whose primary responsibilities, in addition to teaching, included the work—if not the actual title—of writing program administration.[4] First is the sheer size of Freshman or Introductory Composition at most institutions and the ways these immense programs were organized; second is recent historical work about women, historical work which has tangentially uncovered women working as writing program administrators within First-Year Composition programs.

Warner Taylor's comprehensive study, *A National Survey of Conditions in Freshman English* (1929) (begun November 1927 and completed July 1928), indicates that freshman composition (his term) was a major presence on college campuses.[5] Taylor surveyed three hundred colleges and universities (both public and private) with enrollments of five hundred students or more, located throughout the country. He asked for pedagogical and administrative information about the school's composition/writing program.[6] Two hundred thirty-two (77.3 percent) responded. Student/teacher ratios give us some measure of the sheer size of the Freshman English program (see Table 11–1).

Such numbers—over 100,000 freshman at 232 schools or an average of 400 freshman per school—suggest large First-Year Composition programs. Additionally, 65 percent of the schools that answered Taylor's survey classified or ranked their students in some way. Taylor notes that, at Wisconsin,

> we have four themes written, two impromptu, two prepared, on which we base our sectioning. . . . With us there are four groups, designated as A, B, C, D. The A group, that of the advanced Freshman sections, comprises 4 percent of

Table 11–1. Table XVII–Teaching Load Completed July 1928 (Taylor, 21)

	Number of Schools Definitely Replying	Average Students per Semester
Larger Institutions (more than 300 Freshmen)	60	94
Middle West	15	88
East	22	91
South	7	108
West	16	101
Smaller Institutions (less than 300 Freshmen)	30	91
Middle West	12	99
East	11	87
South	5	88
West	2	84
State Institutions	27	95
Middle West	8	88
East	4	107
South	6	99
West	9	93

> the class, the B group 60 percent, the C group 30 percent, and the D group—Sub-Freshman English, for which no credit is given—is 6 percent. (15)

Consider, for a moment, the administrative tasks implicit in such a statement. Someone had to create a writing prompt, administer the test, develop an evaluation schema, evaluate the responses or train the graders, develop the classifications, and design the curriculum that met each group's needs, as well as the myriad of other tasks involved in running such a program. The size and structure of these programs suggests the need for a person who *acted* like a full-time writing program administrator, whether or not he or she was actually *named* WPA or its equivalent. As anyone who has worked in such a program knows, it can not simply be run out of someone's back pocket.

Additionally, historical work on women's pedagogical practices has revealed that some of these teachers also functioned as administrators.[7] At the

1996 Conference on College Composition and Communication, D'Ann George presented her research on Regina Crandall, Mount Holyoke's Director of English–Essay Work. In the first two decades of this century, Regina Crandall's responsibilities were, for the most part, administrative. Crandall "presided over placement tests, sought and found qualified teachers, handled cases of plagiarism and academic dishonesty and assigned teachers to courses and sections of courses" (5). In *Toward a Feminist Rhetoric* (1996), JoAnn Campbell presents a sample of the administrative writings of Gertrude Buck and Laura Wylie, women who ran, respectively, the Introductory Writing Program and the English department at Vassar from 1897 until 1922. Official university correspondence, such as annual reports and finance requests, reveals a collaborative writing process: Although Wylie would have been officially responsible for the correspondence, Buck often drafted the documents and, on one occasion, even signed the report for Wylie. Internal memos written by Laura Wylie after Gertrude Buck became a professor urged that "'Professor Buck's salary be made equal to that of the head of the department' because 'Miss Buck does her full share' of administrative work, 'relieving me entirely of a great deal of it'" (xxii; 253). The majority of papers in the Vassar archives deal with administrative, rather than pedagogical, work; from all accounts, running the department took up a significant portion of Wylie and Buck's time. Correspondence between Wylie, Buck, and the fourth and fifth presidents of Vassar, James Monroe Taylor and Henry Noble MacCracken, reveals interesting tensions. While both presidents respected and admired its pedagogical and scholarly work, the English department's administrative demands were a constant source of frustration. During their twenty-two year tenure, Buck and Wylie had a fairly continuous refrain: more space, more teachers, more money.

John Brereton's *The Origins of Composition Studies in the American College, 1875–1925* (1995) also mentions another woman administrator. A brief introduction notes that "[Luella Clay Carson] taught rhetoric and literature at the University of Oregon from 1888 to 1909, serving also as dean of women. . . . Later she was a teacher and administrator at a number of colleges in the Midwest" (353). Carson, educated at the University of Chicago and Columbia, reached the pinnacle of her career as the president of Mills College (1909–1914). After the Board of Regents of Mills College unfairly blamed her for decreasing enrollments, she was forced to resign. She would never again hold a long-term position. From 1917–1919, Drury College hired her as their Dean of Women and a member of the English department. Then she worked at Milwaukee-Downer College from 1919–1920 and ended her career as the acting head of the English department at Yankton College in South Dakota from 1920–1921 ("Carson," *Who's Who* n.d.; "Carson" *Who's Who Among North American Authors* 1976; Brereton 1995).

I am convinced of the historical importance of these women—as well as other, yet undiscovered/unexamined women—to Rhetoric and Composition and contemporary writing program administration. A project I am currently work-

ing on explores how Laura Wylie, Gertrude Buck, and Luella Clay Carson addressed the internal ideological, fiscal, and political arguments that surrounded the introductory writing programs. Using internal memos, reports, budgets, local and university newspaper stories, and available personal correspondence, I am tracing how these women negotiated and maintained power within the university setting for the composition program under their guidance.[8] Such historical study is relevant to contemporary writing program administrators for a number of reasons; I will focus briefly on the two I find most compelling.

First, as Shirley Rose and Ruth Mirtz demonstrated in Chapter 9 and 10, an historical knowledge of programmatic administration increases our ability to argue persuasively within institutional settings; historical information aids our ability to analyze effectively the audiences to whom we address our arguments. As Mirtz's story demonstrates, successful administration relies on understanding the historical development of a program and the reasoning that shaped the current situation. Similarly, administrative history helps us to evaluate the potential persuasiveness of an argument; advancing arguments that failed in similar contexts in the past does little good. Thus, knowing our history allows for the creation of what Berlin calls a "dialectic between past and present" (1994, 123).

Second, simply having a history creates legitimacy for contemporary work. Issues of legitimacy are of particular interest to WPAs, whose work is often viewed by English departments and academic administrators as non-intellectual service work or, more commonly, as invisible, nonexistent work. For First-Year Composition, the area of Rhetoric and Composition most commonly associated with writing program administration due to its widespread presence in the university system, this has proven to be a double-edged sword. First-Year Composition WPAs have little legitimacy—historical or otherwise—because they are seen as doing nonintellectual service work for a service course unworthy of serious study or research. Yet, as the existence of the Council of Writing Program Administrators, its journal *WPA: Writing Program Administration*, and its conference; the listserv WPA-L; and various edited collections of work about writing program administration argue, writing program administration is intellectual work that requires both practical and theoretical knowledge. The development of administrative histories is both a validation of contemporary scholarship and a logical extension of the contemporary work that has led to the recognition of writing program administration as a scholarly endeavor. Because administrative histories examine administrative practices, they demonstrate that the work of writing program administration has existed as long as there have been institutions offering writing courses.

It is fitting that, as we continue to develop our field, we work to discover ourselves in the past. For, as James Berlin reminds us, the creation of a history is even more important than just the validation of those whose history is being told: "The history of rhetoric is never above the gaming of politics, and the stakes are usually the highest imaginable: *a voice in the formation of the*

very subjects who constitute society" (1987b, 56, emphasis added). To create a history, as Berlin argues, grants one the authority and the precedent to shape not only the state of the present, but also the state of the future.

Notes

1. Areas related to Composition and Rhetoric, such as Professional Writing, have followed the same trend. Katherine Adams presents a (mostly male) world of Professional Writing pedagogy in *A History of Professional Writing Pedagogy Instruction in American Colleges* (1993). Michael G. Moran (1993) has examined Frank Aydelotte's pedagogical approach at MIT. Bibliographies on the subject of the history of Professional Writing include William Rivers' "Studies in the History of Business and Technical Writing" (1994) and W. Tracy Dillon's "The New Historicism and Studies in the History of Business and Technical Writing" (1997). Additionally, Randy Brooks' (1991) dissertation examines business writing textbooks of the 1920s.

2. Both Ruth Mirtz (Chapter 10) and Shirley Rose's (Chapter 9) essays detail some of the difficulties inherent in archival work.

3. Since the original drafting of this essay, *The Life and Legacy of Fred Newton Scott* (Stewart and Stewart 1997) has been published. The latter section of the book details the political maneuverings by James Holy Hanford, Oscar James Campbell, and Louis Strauss to dismantle the Rhetoric department at the University of Michigan.

4. Although the remainder of this essay will deal exclusively with Introductory Composition, I wish to stress that *all* types of writing program administration—developmental, technical, business, or any other—should develop their own histories. Because Introductory Composition and its administration are the most widespread within the university world, its history is both more accessible and more prevalent.

5. This survey and the corresponding information come from two sources: Brereton's *The Origins of Composition* (1995) and Warner Taylor's *A National Survey* (1929). The tables and their headings are taken directly from Taylor's original. As such, despite my own questions, I am unable to expand on or explain some of Taylor's cryptic headings such as "Average Students per Semester."

6. Questions Warner asked include "Do you use a rhetoric? A handbook?" "Do you form special Sub-Freshman sections for poor students?" "Do you form special advanced sections for students of pronounced ability? If so, approximately what percentage of the class forms these special sections?" "Will you kindly state the normal minimum-maximum range of instructors' salaries?" "Do you engage assistants or graduate students to teach Freshman English? If so, a) what salary are they paid per section and b) what percentage of total instruction do they give?" (4–5)

7. It is important to remember that by the time Harvard made the two-semester English A composition course a requirement, a significant number of women had involved themselves institutionally in Rhetoric and Composition. Women were attending graduate school in ever increasing numbers (Connors 1990; Solomon 1985), and, as the use of teaching assistants rose, women were used to staff the required composition courses. Taylor's comprehensive survey also shows the strong presence of women teachers in Western and Mid-Western Freshman Composition classrooms.

8. The Progressive Era runs from approximately 1890 until 1920 when women received the vote. It is a period when women made great leaps forward, both in terms of access to education and political power. Women received 15 percent of the Ph.D.s awarded in 1920 and were 20 percent of college faculty. At the same time, however, women faced increasing backlash, specifically in terms of access to education; the University of Chicago, coeducational since its founding in 1892, voted to become a sex segregated college in 1902 (Gordon 1990).

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12

Subject to Interpretation

The Role of Research in Writing Programs and Its Relationship to the Politics of Administration in Higher Education

Chris M. Anson and Robert L. Brown, Jr.[1]

In the job descriptions of many writing program administrators (WPAs), "research" takes the form of the usual bureaucratic tasks—complex ones, to be sure—tracking, placing, and assessing students; measuring the effectiveness of instruction or the outcomes of programmatic initiatives; or looking for relationships between students' experiences in writing courses and other institutional trends such as retention rates or success in writing-intensive courses. From the perspective of the new or aspiring WPA, such realms of data collection and analysis—institutional research in the main—are not only important but may be the material products on which the survival of the WPA or the entire writing program depends.

In most cases, the system of values that drives the institution of higher education explains how and why we conduct research as WPAs. Immersed in the culture of the academy, we experience breaches of our tacit ways of working and thinking only when some ideological conflict stands in the way of our usual administrative practices. Baffled why a dean or provost responds to a carefully designed proposal with indifference or resistance, we may fail to see how the wider political system of the institution determines and even predicts such a response. For us to "do" research as WPAs, we need to understand not only the specific methodologies that we might employ to gather and analyze data, but also ways of researching—reading—our own institutions, their practices, their politics, and the disciplinary relationships that affect our work.

In this essay, we want to explore the role of research in the work of WPAs from the perspective of its broader value and institutional legitimacy. We consider how an understanding of extraprogrammatic and institutional ideologies

can shape not only the kind of information we might collect and analyze, but how and whether such information might be presented to constituencies beyond our programs. In so doing, we are acutely aware that *all* relationships between writing programs and their broader institutional settings must be understood as socially constructed, highly localized, temporal, and interpersonal. In order to represent themselves, their programs, their beliefs, and the products of their investigations, successful WPAs must critically read their institutions as complex educational cultures with powerful habits of governance, disciplinarity, and interpretation.

To explore these issues, we consider three working contexts of a WPA for whom "research" has specific temporal meanings. While we intend these situations to show the personal, program-related, and broader institutional values of research for the WPA, we also recognize that the scenes themselves are emblematic, and that quite different questions may surface from the infinite variety of institutional and programmatic contexts in which WPAs are situated.

Knowledge, Power, Identity, and the Credit Cycle

Our research scenes take place in a large writing program at Forest City University, a Research I institution. Linda, the WPA, has been at the helm for two years, having taken over the position from an associate professor who left for another institution. Linda is in the fourth year of her six-year tenure track, and is looking ahead somewhat nervously to her promotion and tenure case. Although her annual reviews generally have been positive, the chair of the English Department where the writing program is housed has noted that her scholarly productivity lags behind the records of recently tenured professors. Linda has placed a couple of short articles in local newsletters and boasts one major essay in a refereed national journal. Her book manuscript is a long way from being finished and has not yet attracted interest from a commercial or academic press.

But these published pieces and works in progress are not the sum total of Linda's writing. Since taking over the writing program, she has issued several reports of investigations she and her colleagues have conducted on the quality of instruction in writing courses, the effects of grading practices, and the benefits to faculty development of a team model for course portfolio assessments. Linda has spoken about these efforts at conferences and has conscientiously prepared versions of the reports for national publication, but reviewers have found them too local to be of much interest to journal subscribers. The department chair has offered Linda no relief from her responsibilities as WPA—no one else can do the job, and the dean has authorized no new hires. As Linda prepares for her tenure review, the chair has advised her to scale back her program-related research and free up some time for the more "serious" activity of scholarly investigation and national-level publication.

Whatever else an institution produces, it always produces its members. Perhaps the most acute account of the way academic culture depends upon complex processes of identity negotiation is Bruno Latour and Steve Woolgar's *Laboratory Life* (1986). Latour and Woolgar tease out the complicated ways in which scientific investigation produces the uncontested, "every-researcher-knows facts." Written by ethnographers who are also materialist theorists, the book meticulously details the complex day-to-day life in a neuroscience laboratory. Organizing that life of fact-production are the systems endemic in research institutions, systems that operate with equal strength in the lives of writing program administrators. Compressing Latour and Woolgar's long and subtle story, we can say that facts are the products of power—power to secure grant funding, hire graduate assistants, buy the complex equipment necessary to "read" cellular structures and functions and "inscribe" the findings. And along with facts, these operations of power produce academic citizens.

The by-products of successful academic work, as Latour and Woolgar see it, are "credit" and "credibility." Credit is public and material; credibility is personal and discursive. Although their terms are tropes, they have a solid, literal basis. An academic worker with credit in the disciplinary community can redeem that credit for appointments, funding, staffing, travel, conference slots, and publication opportunities. Disciplinary stars have deep academic pockets and credit lines at the disciplinary bank.

For our purposes, credibility is more powerfully explanatory. Although difficult to sever from credit (credibility is necessary for credit, because the discipline won't "advance" hard-won disciplinary capital to strangers), credibility is central in the construction of academic identities. We have credibility when we are believed at once, when we are known, when our word is good. The credible academic is cited as an authority, while those who have not achieved credibility must "support" or "defend" their claims—a process Latour and Woolgar illustrate with meticulous citation studies showing a trajectory from publishing under one's own name to being cited by others.[2]

To understand the position of the writing program administrator as both the consumer and producer of knowledge—some of it presented in the venues of "research"—we must recognize and describe the cycles of credit driving the research university and its members. The "product" of the writing program may well not be the recognized product of the disciplinary departments, nor the one recognized by the higher administrators who determine our fortunes, individually and collectively. Linda's job, put simply, is to help in the development of students. Sometimes this process generates, almost as a by-product, data about cognition, development, disciplinarity, rhetoric and so on. But the primary product—student development—is ineffable, provisional, often invisible, requiring an act of immense faith in the process of education and the community that carries on after students complete their writing courses.

Where, then, does Linda garner her credibility? What is it that she does (more critically: that she can prove she does) that gives her respect and material solidity? Finally, this may be a key question underlying the larger question of what she may be trying to "prove" when she conducts research as a WPA.

For WPAs like Linda whose work supports the development of well-run programs, the most conscientious and theoretically grounded research may not bring either credit or credibility beyond, or perhaps even within, the field of composition. In the traditions of the research university, much programmatic research is conducted by professional staff members (such as directors of learning skills centers or departments of admissions), whose own credibility and job status are determined largely by how well they support the operation of the institution. As tenured or tenure-track faculty, most WPAs at research-oriented institutions must earn their credit and credibility according to the usual disciplinary norms for the professoriate: through rigorous scholarship and plentiful national publication. In other departments where scholarship focuses on students and learning (such as education or psychology), it is more important for the results to reach a national audience than to improve teaching and learning in the academic unit where the investigations take place.

WPAs who have not yet gained the credit necessary for tenure—and there are still many untenured WPAs—are in the curious position of working within a domain of research that is most powerfully of value within their own writing programs, useful nationally mainly as contextually grounded case studies of administrative and curricular practice. In tracing the role of research within the field of composition studies, Peter Vandenberg notes the conflicted position that the tension between "scholarship" and "practice" has imposed upon many composition workers:

> The subordination of "local" values, primarily teaching, to professional values reflects the degree of importance placed on the primary material incentive for advancement, scholarly publication; and it is published scholarship that defines the dichotomization of labor in rhetoric and composition. . . . The very materiality of a textual product promotes its exchange value. Itself an extension of other texts, every published article is a potential locus for continued profitability as an artifact to be possessed and assimilated in later ventures. (1998, 26)

From the perspective of its professional value to the individual WPA, research by the standards of many universities stands in potential opposition to the daily work of running effective programs. Successful WPAs manage to export local work into national venues, but decisions to conduct that local work—the questions asked, the research methods used, and the energy put into commodifying the results in specific kinds of texts—are often influenced by the desire for a national hearing. *Purely* local matters, perhaps even ones of some urgency, must be relegated to domains of "extra time" or passed on to workers for whom credit and credibility, traditionally defined, are not a concern.

Although organizations such as the Council of Writing Program Administrators have led efforts to redefine the nature of WPAs' work in light of the institutional credit cycle (WPA Executive Committee 1996), cases like Linda's abound. As we interrogate the role and nature of research, we must put a critical eye to the relationship between the WPA's heavy responsibilities in an area of profound importance to higher education—the development of written literacy—and the continued dominance of a credit cycle inherited, after all, from university life in nineteenth-century Germany, a world increasingly remote from the needs and goals of our present society.

Disciplinary Knowledge in Composition: Aliens in Our Own Homes

Early in Linda's work as WPA, she and her colleagues spent several months creating a student evaluation form so that it would fit with the university's standard questions (to document the program's success), while also recognizing the theorized bases of their instruction and mission (paying attention to process issues, recognizing differences in discursive abilities and their cultural sources, allowing for teacher innovation while demonstrating consistency, and so on). It was a complex process dominated by an imposed, entirely practical goal: show what the program does, accurately, verifiably and transparently, but make sure the data speak to those gathered and used by the institution. There was little talk about paradigms of research. There was nothing in Linda's training that would have led her to ask, "How much do you think you learned in this course?" and then report the results with a mean and standard deviation derived from a five-place Likert scale—the most "positivist" research imaginable. But she and her colleagues wanted to present their work well and compellingly. In their higher-administrative culture, if they don't look both cooperative as citizens and demonstratively successful as a service organization, their writing program could be in danger.

At the heart of the work on evaluation, Linda wanted to customize the standard form to get at finer details of their curriculum. But the institution has a policy of providing only the standard "short form" for free, and reporting statistical results for free only when that form is used. To customize a form incurs both printing costs and a per-evaluation processing fee. Because the program serves almost five thousand students a year, customization would use up funds that could be spent to improve the working conditions of teachers or add tutors to the writing center. The consequence of these tensions is the quandary of whether to develop a costly evaluation form which, even in its attempts to gather more specific feedback about the writing curriculum, militates against the program's desire to explain success or failure contextually and conditionally.

When considered abstractly, research often falls into categories that suggest we "choose" a paradigm and the methods that inform it. For example, Lincoln and Guba's (1994) overview in the *Handbook of Qualitative Research*

offers a four-part taxonomy of research paradigms: positivist, postpositivist, critical, and constructionist, differentiated (variously) by ontology and location in the history of disciplines—viewed from the present political moment.

As WPAs, many of us can't recall thinking explicitly about choosing a research paradigm. More typically we respond to a rhetorical "exigency," backed up by a not-so-subtle economic imperative: "Can you demonstrate student satisfaction with your courses?" "Can you show that students understand the articulation of the curriculum?" "Can you prove that real increases in fluency result from your ESL classes?" The source of the desire for this information constrains how we form our research projects. Although we may well have compelling, professional reasons to want the information we seek, we never approach research in neutral terms. Always, there is a powerful Other looking over our shoulders as we work—and we form our research programs with those interests clearly in mind.

In contrast to paradigmatic treatments of research, it may be more fruitful for WPAs to recognize that research is an active, cultural practice. We are not positivists or constructivists as much as we are workers, whose relationships to our many formal and informal employers are determined by how we talk about our work in the public documents we call writing program research. Our distinction between the abstractions of "paradigms" and the concrete reality of cultural "practices" relies on the work of Pierre Bourdieu in his 1977 *Outline of a Theory of Practice*, and Michel deCerteau's in his 1984 *The Practice of Everyday Life*. Both these theorists seek to replace the static structural abstractions of much social science research with accounts of ongoing, changing practices which characterize and organize everyday life—Forest City's included. For Bourdieu, the theoretical distance inherent in the structural style of analysis removes the researcher from the scene studied: "[I]n taking up a point of view on the action, withdrawing from it in order to observe it from above and from a distance, [we constitute] practical activity as an object of observation and analysis, a representation" (1977, 2).

The analysis implied in these critiques offers a chance to see an order in our programs' histories that gains its meaning from particulars. What often seem like accidents, quirks of personalities, psychopathology, idiosyncrasy, and plain stupid or lucky behavior can often be understood as cultural practices: small rhetorical figures in a letter; the turn of a head in a faculty meeting; the son or daughter of a powerful academic player in a writing class; the career trajectories of academic "players." In Bourdieu and deCerteau's terms, these are the data of cultural practices, ordered by the complex habits of complex, socialized beings in complex academic cultures—particular, unique, and fine-grained.

The results of the survey at Forest City can produce a kind of research capital that keeps the suspicions or attacks of "outsiders" at bay. The numbers tell the story: The writing program engenders student satisfaction at a reasonably high level, higher than in the departments of economics, history, psychol-

ogy, philosophy, and even in the literature courses in the program's parent department. Adding questions to assess the value of small-group conferencing, in-class discussions, and tutorial help makes sense to the WPAs, even via a limited, positivistic method of measuring programmatic success. But the cultural practices of the institution, which demands a kind of surface-level accountability, do not support such "extra" information gathering, which could be of some formative use to the program.

Thus, the evaluation form generates statistical data at a level of generality that is useful not to the program itself but to the institution that demands and controls the evaluation. Ironically, once the data are positioned and interpreted in other settings—an undergraduate curriculum committee, a meeting of deans—they become recontextualized and given specific, local meaning. Acting on subjective impressions about students' writing, as well as anecdotes and hearsay, members of the professoriate can disregard numbers that show the composition program has stronger student evaluations than the history and philosophy departments. Rumor has it that students receive higher grades in composition than the rigorous history courses—and that explains it. Before long, the beleaguered WPA is thrown back into the empirical data-gathering-and-crunching mill to produce correlations between evaluation scores and grades, or course retention rates, or success in further classes. Whether these correlations have any practical use within the program itself is no longer the issue, and time that could have been spent working with qualitative, context-specific information is given over to positivist research that may have little or no effect either within or beyond the program itself. Yet to resist engaging in such research widens the program's vulnerabilities in the institution's sometimes stormy climate.

Working and Playing Well with Others

In her capacity as WPA, Linda has been serving as a sometime-WAC consultant to the psychology department. Forest City has a campus-wide, partly autonomous WAC program responsible for consultation, training, approval and advice for disciplinary departments establishing upper-division "writing intensive courses." But because the WAC program reports directly to the central administration, it is inevitably configured as a "surveillance" operation regardless of what principled literacy interventions it undertakes, and regardless of its intentions in so doing. When it "reports" on departmental WAC activities, it inevitably inscribes the operations of disciplinary departments into the public text. Its representations construct disciplinary activity to the entire community—even when not intending to do so. Much of the activity of the WAC program is necessarily political: repair, correction, bridge-building and solidarity work.

Linda is a contributing author of a report of writing activities in departments across the university: What sorts of writing are students doing in classes and how much of it? The report is an exemplary piece of institutional rhetoric:

careful, qualified—long on description, short on evaluation. The WAC research team looked at the number of pages students wrote in representative courses (all forms of writing, from journal writing to formal essays), at opportunities for process work and revision, and at sites for collective/collaborative feedback during different stages of the writing process. Writing behaviors were reduced to numbers and the numbers reported comparatively.

From the perspective of composition studies, psychology students looked a-literate. They wrote little, in relative page numbers, and they seemed to write only to report, with the reports structured by provided, fixed formats. But the psychology department reacts with strong righteous indignation: theirs is a department of apprenticeship, active learning, and communal teaching. Hands-on work informs their curriculum, and experimental methods are developed, deployed, and performed in intensive laboratory sites, to be discussed in student teams, and between the teams and their instructors. After experiments are completed, the teams present their findings in reporting formats that exactly emulate the journals supporting the disciplines. Critical reading, bibliographical work, and engagement with primary materials of the disciplines are part of courses at all levels. They are, they claim, "doing psychology," including doing psychological writing as it is done in the discipline. The WAC program simply does not know their discipline and its practices, so what looks like writing to a psychologist is invisible to the WAC researchers and absent in their representation of the department's work.

When it is situated in other curricular units, a WPA's research may be anchored on an unrecognized substrate of disciplinary ideology and practice. The fast and sometimes unhappy reaction of members of these other disciplines to the results of that research may reveal the disjunctions between the assumptions of composition studies and those of, for example, solidly objectivist disciplines manifested in particular wings of psychology departments.

It is hard to fault the native writer's knowledge of his or her work. Clearly, a discipline like psychology will know that it is doing writing-intensive work, but its definition of disciplinary literacy may have a different genealogy from that familiar in composition studies. The good efforts of the WPA as WAC-promoter to encourage writing-intensive teaching can go totally awry when they threaten (in a very real way) the disciplinary authority and material conditions through which a department is evaluated and rewarded.

The telling point in this situation is that the *practices* of these two disciplinary sites are local, particular, economically critical, and often incomprehensible outside their own domains. The position initially defined by the WAC program is in direct opposition to the psychology department it set out to serve. It would have been too easy for these two "sites of production" simply to become defensive and each cast the other as political enemy: "touchy-feely, naive, one-size-fits-all" writing practitioners versus illiterate, modernist, positivist, numbers-driven psychologists. After all, their institutional and personal fortunes are at stake.

Our reading through particular disciplinary practices provides a different and more positive interpretation. Critical here is the double recognition that first, disciplinary practices are always "engines" for producing value—they create us through our affiliation with them and through our use of their discourse to represent our work; and second, that composition studies is itself a *particular* discipline.

Why should other academic departments or university administrations pay any attention to composition specialists? Before we answer too glibly that "we're the writing experts," we must consider the psychology department's response. While we certainly are "experts" in many ways, we are also disciplinary partisans with an economic program in mind. In simple economic terms, writing courses, with their university-wide mandates and huge enrollments, are economic golden geese in the age of enrollment-driven economics. The department that controls the writing requirements has an economic engine of great power. Furthermore, writing courses and programs may be construed as a threat. Writing instruction is usually highly labor-intensive; intimate, individualized, based on feedback and interaction, these "intersubjective" teaching situations demand expensive teacher-time. To the other departments, these activities may seem to bleed time and effort from an already packed curriculum based on disciplinary content.

An adequate account of the relationship between writing programs and their fellow academic departments must recognize that, as disciplinary writers, talkers, and thinkers, WPAs are embedded in a discourse that assigns us and our work *value*. It is critical in defining both the informal psychic "economy" of our credit and credibility, our reputations and relationships in the academy, and the literal economy in which our efforts are valued—in brute terms of salary and funding. Our disciplinary discourses also mediate how we *construct* and see the world. What we take as fact, as evidence, as proof, as compelling arguments indexes the systems of representation through which we meet our world and our work. These discourses may not be widely shared; indeed, they may contradict those familiar and natural to our disciplinary neighbors.

The subtlety of these discursive relations is a source of constant wonder and surprise, as our clear messages go misunderstood and unread, or as a department latches on to the principles of a short workshop and begins creating an entirely new way of teaching students. WPAs who are called upon to work across their curricula not only need to understand the disciplinary culture(s) into which they are immersed, but they also need to have a range of approaches at hand so they can study and report back information that will be seen as helpful. Does this result in an unprincipled, untheorized approach to research, a kind of investigative schizophrenia? Not exactly: The need for plurality is strategic as we learn to meet different disciplines and curricular settings on their own terms, find ways to provide what members of these settings need, and then introduce alternatives that can slowly change perspectives and models of working, teaching, and learning. WPAs researching other "live" contexts have

always been caught in a duality of investigation, doing what works for members of those contexts and then interpreting, and often reporting, that work for the field of composition, drawing on the necessarily more complex and historicized knowledge it bears.

WPAs and the Future of Research

Although Linda was able to publish another essay in a national journal, her devotion to her writing program did not allow her to abandon ship so that she could produce enough national-level scholarship to earn the credit her university required. Her tenure was denied, even after appeal, and she experienced a period of considerable depression and self-doubt. But because she had gained so much expertise as a WPA, she soon found another tenure-track position at a smaller institution where her work has been consistently valued within the more localized credit cycle.

After Linda's departure, the composition program continued to show, through published statistics from its student evaluation forms, that its student satisfaction rate was very high. Pre-test and post-test measures of student achievement in writing courses revealed significant gains in their abilities and in their confidence as writers. Correlational studies of grades in writing courses and success in other academic work involving writing showed that the program was adequately preparing students for the demands of courses across the curriculum. In spite of all these research statistics, many of them reported in positivistic ways often valued by members of traditionally empirical disciplines, rumor and hearsay about students' poor writing continued to place higher accountability on the program. Why couldn't the students learn to fix their grammar and punctuation and write effective sentences? Why were they reading essays on multiculturalism instead of figuring out the correct use of apostrophes and semicolons? Eventually, the entire program was removed from its position within the English Department, its administrators were relieved of their duties, and a new writing program, run by nontenured academic professionals, was created under the direct supervision of the dean's office.

Perhaps because of the initial turmoil generated by the WAC report, Forest City decided to create writing centers for disciplinary sites and large departments—centers where students could receive writing help from disciplinary scholars who also were trained in rhetoric and composition. The Writing Center program was designed to provide structural recognition of disciplinary difference that organizes Forest City and many research universities, and free the WAC program to provide aid, organization and support at a higher level. This structural opposition among different goals and methods ended up being necessary and representative—virtually inevitable when WAC (or literacy activities generally) is placed in contact with the normal activities of disciplinary life. The configuration worked well, and soon received endorsement from most parts of the large and complex curriculum at Forest City.

The successes and failures of research in these three situations, like so many others in countless institutions, remind us that the future of the profession is contingent upon and subject to many social, institutional, and disciplinary pressures both experienced and unseen. In closing, we would suggest some principles for continued theorizing about the role of research for the WPA and his or her colleagues.

First, it is clear that WPAs are situated curiously within institutions of higher education. Writing programs are centers that both deliver crucial instruction to university students and also serve as the producers and repositories of knowledge about literacy. Supporting the first role, WPAs are often undermined and marginalized by "high-power" departments whose research is often well-supported and has only tenuous connections to education. Thus, "WPA research" looks like data-gathering in support of a service unit. In supporting the second role, WPAs may gain more credibility because their work appears to match the disciplinary nature of scholarship across the institution; but this scholarship tends to be little known and misunderstood. The educational role often blurs or subverts the research role, creating a loss of credibility in spite of internal scholarly prestige. The solution to this dilemma of representation must come from stronger efforts among WPAs to explain the complex relationships between the two roles of research.

At the same time, the field of composition must be more proactive in helping institutions themselves to change, especially in seeing the value of more localized investigations and the information they yield. At times of increasing accountability in higher education as a whole, and decreasing financial support, disciplines that support more effective, principled, and humane approaches to education may begin to be recognized for their contributions. WPAs, in their primary focus on the teaching and learning of writing, must represent their research as central to the educational missions of their institutions.

Finally, composition studies must put to use its strong tradition of research, especially along ethnographic and qualitative lines, to study in more depth some of the issues we have only sketched here with the help of anecdote. Always attracted to the process of self-reflection, the field needs to continue to investigate the ways in which research is and might be used within writing programs and across universities. Documenting and analyzing cases in which research has succeeded or failed to bring about reform within a department or beyond it, or has contributed (or failed) to support a WPA's professional advancement, can help us to understand the complex relationships between our unique work in the academy and the traditions, ways of working, and kinds of recognition that the academy values.

Notes

1. The order of authorship is alphabetical.

2. Latour and Woolgar are not faulting scholars for behaving as though their work were

controlled by issues of power and visibility; indeed, they treat cycles of credit as an inevitable aspect of scholarly life. Certainly, neuroscientists are not working merely to aggrandize themselves; they are advancing knowledge in their field. But the work they do depends on processes by which all of us produce our disciplinary selves.

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13

"Seeing" the WPA With/Through Postmodern Mapping

Tim Peeples

Who are WPAs? How do they fit within academic organizational structures? How do they create new organizational relations? Such questions surround the scholarship of writing program administration and reflect the professional search for a suitable WPA identity (Gunner 1997; Hult 1995; Janangelo and Hansen 1995; McLeod 1995; Weiser 1997). Responses to these questions of identity have focused largely on *who* the WPA is and *what* the WPA does. However, current discussions within the fields of postmodern organization and spatial studies that concern constructions of identities direct attention not to the who or what of identities but to the *where* of identities (DuGay 1996a and b; Foucault 1984a and b,1986; Kirby 1996). Rather than locating identity in persons or duties, these discussions locate identities spatially. That is, identities arise out of the spaces in which people live, work, and play. The shift in focus to location and position in space also has brought about a shift in terminologies. Rather than use terms such as "role" and "identity" that signify stable, unified positions, "subjectivity" has become a key term because it signifies the dynamism, multiplicity, and fragmentation of people/positions. This chapter reflects these two postmodern theoretical shifts and, consequently, moves us away from the current focus on roles and principles as ways to understand WPAs. To inquire into the kinds of questions mentioned here, this chapter situates the WPA *subject* within the organizational *where* of writing program administration; it constructs images of WPAs as organizational subjects, subjects of academic organizational space. By seeing WPAs as organizational subjects, we construct new images of WPAs that help us better envision possibilities for alternative organizations of our work.

In order to build a new conceptualization of the WPA as an organizational subject, there must be a way to "see" this form of subjectivity. Seeing subjectivity poses its own difficulties, for subjectivity "is a conglomeration of temporary positions rather than a coherent identity," and it "resists deterministic

explanations" because it "always exceeds a momentary subject position" (Faigley 1992, 110). Seeing the WPA poses similar difficulties. As Joseph Janangelo says of the position, it "eludes existing categorization and domestication" (1995, 8).

How does one see WPA subjectivities? One of the ways we attempt to see something that is fragmented and dynamic is to place it against a relatively stable background, whereby we can at least mark its movements across space. Applied to WPAs, we often place ourselves against stable organizational backgrounds. That is, we use the organization of academic institutions to "categorize" and "domesticate" the dynamic, fragmented position of the WPA. However, the "categories" of organization, space, and institutional structure that have been traditional means of "domesticating" the working subject also are being shaken by postmodern organization and spatial studies. No longer is organizational space theorized as simply a static backdrop or structure against which the subject is pinned down. In addition to its traditional bounded, material characteristics, organizational space is simultaneously being characterized as the outcome of dynamic social processes. In other words, postmodern theories of organization and geography have us reconsidering organizational space as both bounded, material structures *and* dynamic, social processes.

Postmodern Mapping

Postmodern mapping is a research method which allows us to read such complex organizational space. As I will illustrate through the analysis of a specific WPA case, postmodern mapping enables WPAs to investigate their own positioning in institutions as well as to investigate and analyze a variety of relationships among various institutional spaces within and outside the writing program.

Coming from the field of social cartography, mapping has gained currency as an effective way of representing the fragmentation and fluidity of human subjects. As Rolland Paulston argues, "it is a project of and for the postmodern era; it is a new method to identify changing perceptions of values, ideologies and spatial relations" (1996, xviii). Furthermore, it "makes possible a way of understanding how sliding identities are created" (xxi). In addition to representing the unsettled subject, mapping is being used also by postmodern geographers, such as Soja (1989, 1996), to unsettle static, structural conceptions of space and to represent its dynamic, socially constructed characteristics. In these ways, mapping methodologies hold great promise for the project of seeing WPAs as organizational subjects.

Despite the promise of maps, they are simultaneously being critiqued for their ability to hide, erase, and colonize some spaces as they open up and privilege others (Barton and Barton 1993; Soja 1989, 1996; Woods 1992). The positive methodological response of postmodern mapping (Barton and Barton 1993; Porter 1998; Porter and Sullivan 1996; Soja 1989; Sullivan and Porter 1993) is an effort to address these critiques. From this work being done on

postmodern mapping, I suggest some preliminary strategies for mapping WPA subjectivities that capture some of their simultaneous, fragmented, fluid organizational positions. First, our work should construct multiple maps of WPA organizational subjectivity. Rather than construct single maps that claim to represent fully the organizational positionings of the WPAs, we should construct several competing maps *within* case analyses. In addition to developing multiple maps within particular cases, our work should encourage readings *across* cases. This approach encourages the development of an expanding set of maps that begin to capture the complexities of WPAs' organizational subjectivities, rather than leading to a grand, unified image or Theory represented in a single map. The text surrounding these multiple maps should, then, comment on what is privileged and obscured in the maps and even suggest what other maps might be possible. We must read across situated cases to see how the administrative work of postsecondary literacy is complexly organized. Only this way will we begin to understand the complexities of WPA positionality so that we might construct better spaces/practices for the study, teaching, and practice of postsecondary literacy.

A Dialogic Socio-Spatial Methodology

Although we have identified such helpful mapping strategies, we still face the difficulty of mapping organizational space. Approached in postmodern spatial studies (LeFebvre 1991; Massey 1994; Soja 1996; Thrift 1996; Watts 1996) and postmodern organizational studies (Alvesson and Deetz 1996; Carlsnaes 1992; Clegg and Hardy 1996; Reed 1996) *both* as a structural entity *and* a dynamic social process, organizational space becomes very difficult to map. How can we map organizational space so that it neither a) reifies space as the "box" within which all actions arise, b) reifies social processes as the creative source for all spaces, nor c) obscures the relationship between material, structural space and space as a social process?

Attempts to construct socio-spatial methodologies are few and very recent (Soja 1996, 129–130). However, one of the approaches to building such methodologies emphasizes the dialectical relationship between material, structural space and space as a social process (Soja 1996, 73–74; 81–82; 129–130). As Soja argues, "at least insofar as we maintain, to begin with, a view of organized space as socially constructed," one of the key notions of a socio-spatial dialectic is that "social and spatial relations are dialectically inter-active," "that social relations of production are both space-forming and space-contingent" (1996, 81). "This two-way relationship," Soja argues, "defines—or perhaps redefines—a socio-spatial dialectic" (1996, 129).

To emphasize this dialectical relationship between space as bounded, material structure and space as social process, analyses of WPA cases should include approaches to space that are both structurally and socially focused. Furthermore, we should not only encourage dialectical readings across these

two approaches to space, but we should actively analyze the interactions between the two. The following sample analysis concentrates only on a social process spatial approach to WPA organizational subjectivity. If included, a structural analysis would look at organizational features that form generalizable patterns that often are quantifiable and objectively observed. Within the following case, one might map the WPA's structural space in terms of resources, constituencies, reporting lines, and/or organizational size. Using such features, one would map the structural space(s) within which the WPA is positioned. Then, reading across social process and structural maps, we would examine the interaction between the two, the ways that structural spaces and social processes interact in the positioning of WPAs.

Sample Analysis: The Wendy Bishop Case

The following case is described by Wendy Bishop and Gay Lynn Crossley in the Spring 1996 issue of *WPA: Writing Program Administration* and turns on the following issue. The Dean and Provost at Florida State University wanted Bishop[1], then a WPA, to hire five more Graduate Teaching Assistants (GTAs), bringing the number of GTAs to seventy-five, in order to cover an increase in freshman enrollment. Arguing that she could not effectively train and supervise any more GTAs without jeopardizing the quality of her staff and first-year composition instruction, Bishop refused to hire the additional GTAs. Neither Bishop's Chair nor the Director of Graduate Studies backed up her decision. The tensions over Bishop's authority to make decisions about the program eventually drove her to resign as director. Since her resignation, the number of GTAs has increased to eighty-six as freshman enrollments have grown. This case represents a host of current issues WPAs face: Teaching Assistant (TA) training and supervision, authority to make programmatic decisions, struggles to maintain a quality staff, economic pressures to serve larger numbers of students, and threats to WPA tenure.

The focus of my analysis is the way Bishop is organizationally positioned in this case, what her organizational space is, how she is (re)produced as an organizational subject. More specifically, I focus on the kinds of conversations or discourses that organizationally (re)position Bishop. My analysis looks at three sets of conversations: disciplinary conversations of rhetoric/composition, conversations arising from the field of writing program administration, and local conversations between past, present, and future WPAs at Florida State. After giving an overview of my analysis, I construct a variety of maps, each developing a way of seeing Bishop's positionality within the case, each constructing a slightly different argument. Rather than represent Bishop's subject position as any one, complete map (or even the combination of the maps I construct), the *process* of multiple-mapping represents the fragmented, dynamic space (as social process) of/in which Bishop is a subject.

Constructing WPA Space: Disciplinary Conversations

An important part of Bishop's organizational subjectivity arises out of disciplinary conversations in rhetoric/composition. The security and strength of any academic position relies heavily on appeals to the disciplinary conversations that have constructed its place within the academy. When hiring a new faculty member, most departments justify their new position according to a need for such and such an expert; they choose and assess candidates largely according to the candidates' familiarity with the conversations of their area of expertise; and when making arguments for the value of their opinion or their place within their department and the larger academic unit, faculty often turn to the disciplinary conversations that constructed a legitimate space for them in the first place. In this way, faculty are to some extent subjects (products and producers) of disciplinary conversations.

It is of little surprise that Bishop's disciplinary subjectivity arises in this case. Bishop cites her degree in rhetoric and composition and the fact that one of her Ph.D. qualifying exam areas was writing program administration as reasons why she should be given the authority to make decisions about what was best for the composition program (1996, 71). Although some of her administrative decisions previously may have caused controversy, she justifies their authority in this case by referring to her disciplinary expertise. "Her authority," Bishop and Crossley argue, "rested in her expertise to develop a respected writing program, not in her ability to maintain a quiet" one (71). When her decision not to hire any new GTAs was overturned, "the message," according to Bishop and Crossley's account, "was that Wendy's expertise in composition and rhetoric and writing program administration carried little influence." They go so far as to argue that Bishop's disciplinary "concerns and values. . . did not fall within the department's priorities" (73). In their final analysis, Bishop and Crossley wonder whether the university's value system "by its nature, is antithetical to our [rhetoric and composition] training" (77).

What is obvious is that a great part of Bishop's organizational subjectivity is constructed in/through the disciplinary conversations of rhetoric and composition. These conversations tell her such things as "there could be no solid graduate program [in rhetoric and composition] without a strong writing program and that a 'strong' writing program is staffed by teachers educated to work toward the objectives of a coherent, theoretically-informed, student-centered curriculum" (71). In these conversations, we can see the discourse of composition and rhetoric—coherence, theoretically-informed practice, student-centered pedagogies—carving out a space within the English department and the larger university, a space from which Bishop gains a large part of her identity (71).

Constructing WPA Space: Administrative Conversations

What is not so obvious and yet very problematic for Bishop is that when she turns to the space carved out by disciplinary conversations of rhetoric/composi-

tion to authorize her decision as the WPA, she finds herself subjected to a different space that is constructed from a different set of conversations. This second set of conversations might be identified as part of the administrative thread within program administration. Rather than turn to disciplinary conversations to form and legitimize practices of writing program administration, conversations within this space turn to administrative and managerial conversations.

With a tone of animosity, Bishop and Crossley powerfully represent these conversations in the voices of anonymous reviewers for *WPA*. They cite one reviewer as responding, in part, to their article:

> many battle-hardened WPAs might suggest that Wendy should have recognized up front that the plan to add five GTAs was a done deal, that she was being informed rather than consulted (probably in the same way the dean "informed" the chair) and that the proper response would be to help the chair figure out—and not in a passive/aggressive way—what resources (offices, supplies, mailboxes, etc.) would be necessary to accommodate the increase, to work with the chair to develop a proposal to get additional resources for the department. (73)

This reviewer's perspective, as represented by Bishop and Crossley, reflects a traditional approach to management/administration. From this perspective, the manager's role is to figure out the most efficient means of organizing resources (people, money, physical space, and so on) to get done what has been determined, typically by others "above" in the hierarchy, must be done.

If managers 1) resist this traditional managerial role (as Bishop does by refusing to hire more GTAs), 2) are later organizationally disciplined (perhaps showing up in a resignation), and 3) try to bring their stories into the conversations of (traditional) administration, their stories are often constructed as victim-narratives. By association, the tellers of the stories are constructed as naïve victims. Bishop and Crossley represent a second anonymous reviewer as one who constructs their story, and Bishop, in this way:

> The whole story is framed in a way that I see as rather tiresome—WPAs are heroic but unrewarded professionals working to perfect programs in the face of great odds; they are victimized by Bad People who conspire to make WPAs' lives miserable. (74)

These reviews, as presented to us by Bishop and Crossley, make up a different set of conversations that contradict, in many ways, the disciplinary conversations of composition and rhetoric. Nevertheless, we see these managerial conversations actively position Bishop as an administrator. Bishop's position is that of both an administrator and a rhetoric and composition specialist. The position she takes, or is a subject of, within the academy is constructed out of both sets of conversations, simultaneously. Her position is not unified: She is not a disciplinary expert in rhetoric and composition *or* an administrator. Simultaneously, she assumes both positions within academic organization, accompanied by their conflicts and fragmentation.

Constructing WPA Space: Local Conversations

At the same time that Bishop finds herself positioned by/within the conflicting conversations of composition and rhetoric and traditional administration, her space also is constructed by local conversations. Certainly, numerous conversations create this space: departmental meetings, minutes, and memos; departmental discussions after presentations like the one by Gregory Ulmer noted in Bishop's notes; administrative and governmental meetings; class discussions; hallway conversations, and so on. Ethnographies would help our field better understand the details and complexities of these local spaces. However, because my aim is to draw general attention to local conversations as one way WPA space is (re)produced, my method of analysis draws attention to this form of space-making only generally. It does so in order to map it against and alongside of the other spatialities of program directors' positions.

The case's local conversations between the past, present, and future WPAs at Florida State University (FSU) highlight the conflicts between the disciplinary and administrative conversations of/in which Bishop is a subject. Because the WPA position at FSU is rotated, Bishop is at once able to converse with the previous WPA and help plan who will succeed her. As discussed earlier, Bishop is positioned within/by the simultaneous but conflicting conversations of rhetoric/composition and traditional administration. Disciplinary conversations position her as a curricular expert whose primary responsibility is the development of a strong writing program, one that is coherent, theoretically informed, and student-centered. At the same time, Bishop's position is constructed by/within administrative conversations that construct her as one who must efficiently manage organizational resources so as to meet organizational needs. Tracing Bishop's local conversations with past and future WPAs at FSU marks the shifting of her subjectivity in and out of these conflicting discourses. Although her movement is marked as a shifting in and out of these two spaces, the space of her organizational subject position must be considered as that which simultaneously includes both of these spaces: the disciplinary and the administrative.

At times, Bishop's local conversations position her within the disciplinary conversations of rhetoric/composition. For instance, Bishop and Crossley write that at the time of this case Bishop was in the process of "arguing for the candidate Wendy felt could be entrusted with the program she'd developed" (71). In this space, Bishop is a subject of disciplinary conversation. She constructs herself as the disciplinary expert who has developed through her expertise a strong program, and she constructs the future WPA as a "keeper" of the disciplinarily strong program. This forward-looking local conversation is also past-looking. Confused by the situation in which she found herself, Bishop asks the previous WPA if she was not told that a primary responsibility of the WPA was "to protect the autonomy of the FYW [First-Year Writing] staff and the teacher-education program," to which she receives affirmation (73). In this line of conversation, we can see that Bishop's position was constructed in past

disciplinary conversations, ones that appealed to her disciplinary expertise and autonomy, and that her position continues to be constructed in/through these local, disciplinary conversations.

In other local conversations, Bishop is a subject of administrative space. From the published case, we do not see Bishop engaged so much in constructing her own position as WPA in these terms, but she is engaged in constructing the future WPA in this space. Through her own discourse, Bishop (re)constructs the next WPA as a subject of/in the same sort of administrative space that causes Bishop's own conflicts. In one place in the case where Bishop tires of struggling against the administrative space the Dean and Chair have constructed for her, she muses, "'I keep thinking, to hell with it, don't fight it, it's all [the next director's problem soon]'" (73). In saying this, Bishop positions herself as the complacent faculty subject who is not responsible for administrative "problems": It's all the next *director's* problems, no longer mine (as a faculty member). Just as traditional administrative discourse positions the administrator as one who efficiently manages resources to get things done, it creates spaces for others who, at times, are positioned as irrelevant to organizational problems or, at other times, are positioned as the resources to be organized and used by administration to get things done. In Bishop's quotation, she assumes the position of neutral resource that administrative discourse creates for much of its academic labor. We also can see this same discourse (re)constructing the space into which the next WPA will enter.

Seeing Bishop's Position With/Through Postmodern Mapping

The previous analyses look at the role of discourse as a spatializing social process out of which Bishop's WPA position arises and through which it is re-produced. Bishop's position as WPA is constructed *out of* disciplinary and administrative narratives, each identifiable in the local conversations between past, present, and future WPAs within Bishop's institution. However, in its narrative form, we struggle to capture the simultaneity and complexity of this process. Furthermore, we get the impression that Bishop's position is constructed through a sort of sequenced process, individual discursive acts leading to the construction of organizational space and positions. However, postmodern theories of space and organization argue that there is not a priority to discursive action and space; they exist simultaneously and are constitutive of one another. Through mapping we can begin to capture some of the simultaneity, fragmentation, and dynamism of WPAs' organizational space.

In the following set of maps, I will map the discursive positioning process that I just examined narratively. The intention is not to replace the narrative analysis with these maps but to supplement one with the other. In combination, they lead to better understandings of complex positionings, and through

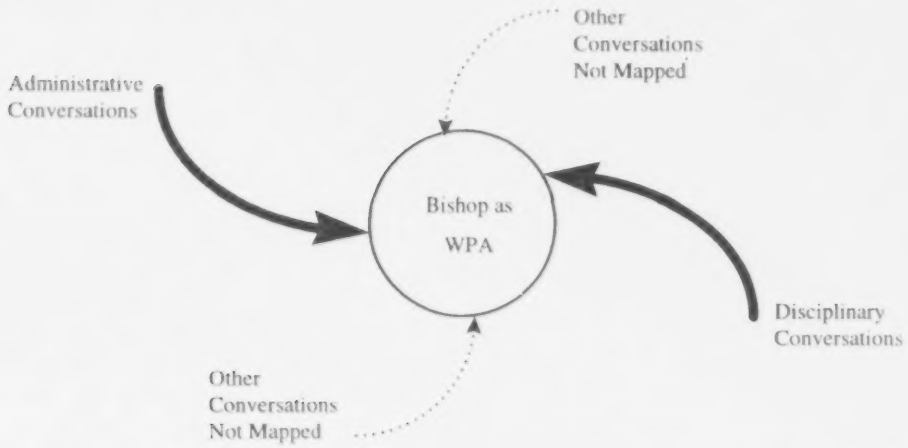

Figure 13–1. Bishop's Position as Constructed out of Various Key Conversations

these understandings, I believe that new organizational forms and alternative organizational practices will become possible.

The first map shows the construction of Bishop's organizational subject position through discourse (see Figure 13–1).

One of the inadequacies of this map of Bishop's position is it argues that Bishop enters into a discursive space out of which she is produced and through which she is determined. However, as the case analysis illustrates, Bishop reproduces the organizational position of the WPA by turning to and re-articulating these disciplinary and administrative conversations that (partially) produce the position. In this way, Bishop is not merely the product but also the producer of the disciplinary and administrative conversations that (re)produce the organizational position of the WPA.

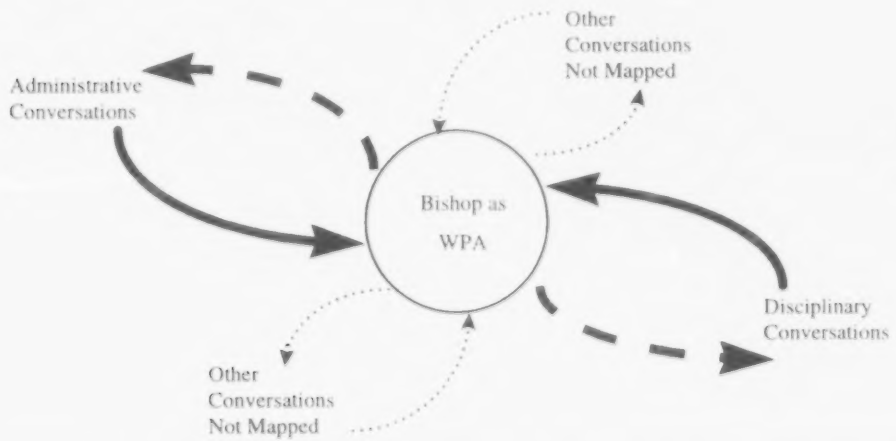

Figure 13–2. Bishop as Product/Producer of WPA Organizational Subjectivity

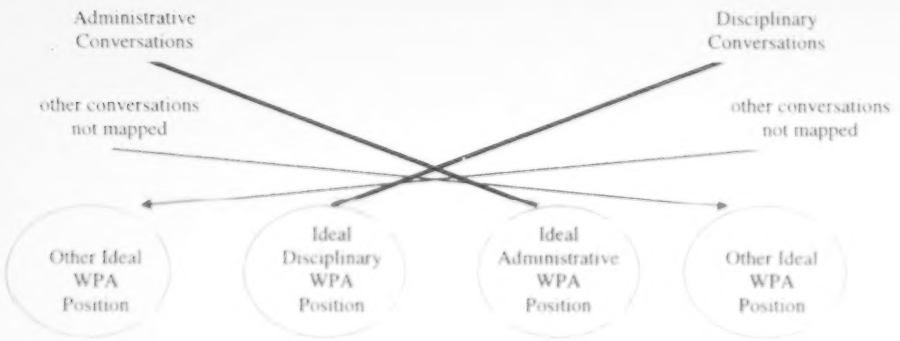

Figure 13–3. Competing Narratives (Re)Producing WPA Organizational Space

Figure 13–2 illustrates what Soja argues about space: It is both medium and outcome of social processes (1996, 7). Bishop's position arises out of the social processes of these particular conversations, but at the same time, the organizational subject who is Bishop discursively (re)produces her own position.

The two preceding maps help argue that Bishop's space as WPA is the medium and outcome of disciplinary and administrative conversations, but these maps give the mistaken impression that the position is a stable, unified site into which one steps and out of which one acts. In terms of understanding the organizational positioning of subjects, this is a disadvantage of mapping the situated activities of discourse. Rather than represent Bishop's WPA position as a unified circle into which various, conflicting conversations combine without tension, we also must come to see her positioned by extending the conversational arrows past one another so that they point to competing idealized positions into which the WPA should (according to each narrative) step. These ideal-ized spaces represent the kinds of positions constructed in and through narratives that are separated from the situated practices of daily life. As ideal-izations, they do not exist as actual organizational positions; nevertheless, they inform us by presenting "horizons" of possibility, ideal positions (Lyotard and Thebaud 1985).

In Figure 13–3, not one but several competing positions make up the organizational space of the WPA's subjectivity. Looked at from above, such a map—one that maps the WPA position according to the social processes of multiple, heterodoxic discourses—would represent the WPA position as fragmented, constructed out of, turning to, and (re)producing a host of conversations in tension.

In Bishop's case, we can take Figure 13–4 and locate various moments when her subjectivity is produced out of/produces certain discourses more strongly than at other times. My analysis located several of these moments arising in the local conversations of the case, and when mapped, they represent the organizational subject of the WPA as dynamic, fragmented, and multiple.

Figure 13–4. Competing Narratives (Re)Producing WPA Organizational Space

Bishop searches for a rhetoric/composition expert to take over her program in position WPA^1, looks for assurance from the past WPA in position WPA^2, and tries to convince herself that it's all the next WPA's problem in position WPA^3. WPA^4 position represents a single "other" position that is not part of my analysis but signifies a host of other positions of/for which Bishop is a subject. Each of these positions is more highly influenced by one or another set of discourses, yet the mapping illustrates that Bishop is simultaneously positioned within an organizational space that is constituted out of multiple, conflicting discourses. Although within situated instances her positionality may be closer to one or another set of discourses, as an *organizational subject*, her position is simultaneously constructed out of and (re)productive of all of these discourses. Organizationally, she is not one or the other but each and all at once, a complex, fragmented state of positionality.

Conclusion

Although the last two maps more effectively capture a sense of spatial positioning and the fragmentation of Bishop's position, they also more greatly obscure the discursive activity that is captured in the first three maps. The first two maps privilege a view of situated discourse, placing emphasis on the acts of discursivity. On the other hand, the latter three privilege an abstracted view, emphasizing the generalized spaces formed through such discursive activity. Mapping enables a way for us to see these two perspectives simultaneously. Within Figure 13–5, we can simultaneously see the situated activity of Figure

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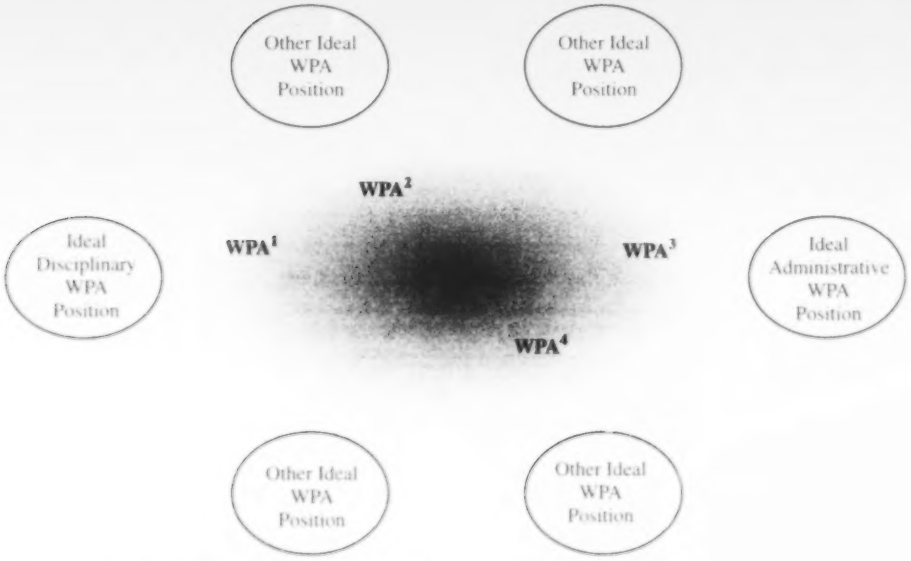

Figure 13–5. Bishop's Position as Fragmented and Multiple

13–2. When analyzed narratively, this simultaneity is less apparent, as we read positioning as a set of sequences, one step logically preceding the next. Rather than one preceding the other, situated discursive acts and the processes of spatially positioning the WPA subject happen simultaneously. When structural maps are added to this social process understanding of organizational space, we begin to better understand the dynamic, fragmented spaces within and out of which we construct programs for postsecondary literacy teaching, research, and practice.

Where does this leave us, and how does it help? My inquiry into organizational subjectivity began with an ethical question: "How *should* a WPA address the great diversity of theoretical perspectives, pedagogical approaches, and multiple constituencies that legitimately reside within writing programs?" As I began examining this question closely, I found a multiplicity of legitimate sources for answering what "should" be done. Budgets, legislatures, students, future employers, the discipline of rhetoric/composition, current program instructors, and so on each can be seen to make legitimate claims of what "should" be done within a writing program, without leading into mere relativism and within particular contexts. Once I began to see this complexity, I realized that I could not answer my question without first getting a better understanding of the complex, organizational position of WPAs. So this work in postmodern mapping.

Postmodern mapping has much to add to our field's shared understanding of WPA subjectivity, and it also can serve as a useful tool for helping us understand the complexities of our own positions within our local contexts. As such, postmodern mapping serves as an inventional tool, giving us a powerful way to

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understand the complexities of our work and our positions within our organizations. However, as we develop new understandings of ourselves as WPAs, as organizational subjects, we must not ignore our continuing daily work of constructing and maintaining effective writing programs. Each day, we face the question with which I began this inquiry, and if nothing more, this analysis illustrates that each day we answer the questions of "should" through what we do (and do not do). Though we do not freely construct our own organizational positions and the organizational spaces of our writing programs (a perspective emphasized, especially, through the kinds of structural analyses not represented here), through our social interactions—discursive, managerial, interpersonal, and so on—we participate in (re)producing ourselves and our programmatic spaces. WPAs *as* researchers understand more than most academics that research should not be separated from one's daily life and that, in order to do our daily work well, we must participate in a process of continuous reflection that brings to bear on our work a great diversity of theories, experiences, stories, and so on. As we continue to ask the questions "what *should. . .* ?" postmodern mappings of our organizational spaces and subjectivities help us better situate ourselves and programs within the dynamic, fragmented complexities that are academic institutions.

Notes

1. In this analysis, my intention is to distinguish between the actual person Wendy Bishop and "Wendy Bishop" the WPA as she is constructed/represented in Bishop and Crossley's article. Like many other readers and interpreters of this article, my knowledge of Bishop and the situation she describes is based entirely on its discursive representation.

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14

Telling a Writing Program Its Own Story

A Tenth-Anniversary Speech

Louise Wetherbee Phelps

The Rhetorical Task: Keynoting the Writing Program's Tenth-Anniversary Conference

In 1986 I went to Syracuse University charged with the task of conceptualizing and founding a new writing program—as it turned out, not from scratch, but by facilitating the self-transformation of a scattered group of teachers and courses into a genuine teaching community. Over the next decade the Writing Program became a department with its own full-time faculty, an increasingly expert cadre of professional writing instructors, and graduate teaching assistants, who collectively implemented a multi-year curriculum of "writing studios." In April 1997 the Writing Program held its Tenth Annual Spring Teaching Conference, taking as its theme "Writing into the 21st Century: Reflecting to Analyze." As the original director (and first department chair) of the Writing Program, I was invited to give the keynote address for the anniversary conference. In this chapter, I use my speech to examine the role of such rhetoric in writing program administration. The gloss that follows the text of the talk analyzes my rhetorical choices and reflects on this genre as a significant form of intellectual work and symbolic action in a writing program.

Writing program administrators often are called on to make speeches, and a special genre of this oral rhetoric is an address to members of their own program. Having completed my term as director and department chair in 1992 (and done a later one-year stint as co-director and chair), I was no longer a WPA but, as a senior faculty member of the Writing Program, continued to have administrative responsibilities. At the time of the speech, I directed graduate studies in Composition and Cultural Rhetoric (state approval for a doctoral program was imminent). As a "postadministrator" of the Writing Pro-

gram, my assignment was an interesting twist on the usual leadership task of providing a vision for the future. In their invitation the organizers of the conference (assistant directors Faith Plvan and Nance Hahn) suggested that I blend a ceremonial role of recollection and celebration with analytic reflections on the program's history. But they also wanted me to strike an inspiring and hopeful note to launch the conference. Emerging as a survivor from the hard times Syracuse University had endured during the late eighties, the program needed to revitalize its confidence and optimism.

The audience would be decidedly mixed in both role and history with the program: veteran faculty (full-time and part-time) and staff who had nursed the program through ten years of intense program development sitting side-by-side with relative newcomers to the faculty or graduate teaching staff. Teaching assistants, less likely to attend, were mostly master's levels students studying creative writing (an increasing majority) or textual and cultural studies in the (separate) department of English. Also listening would be our vigorous young director and chair, Keith Gilyard, then finishing the second year of his leadership, whose vision would shape the program through 1999. These were the rhetorical considerations that shaped my keynote address.

The Speech: "Near the Edge of Chaos: Staying Inventive in the Second Decade"[1]

In 1946, my father interned in the Thorndyke Lab at Boston City Hospital, where researchers were studying the use of newly discovered antibiotics to treat infectious diseases. With other young interns taking care of the researchers' patients, he participated in the heady excitement and obsessive discussions of fundamental discoveries that were to completely transform medicine. He remembers this period nostalgically as one of the great adventures of his life.

At the Boston City my father was lucky enough to be a junior member of one of those legendary "Great Groups" that produce or achieve something extraordinary through their creative collaboration. Warren Bennis and Patricia Ward Biederman have recently studied seven of these groups, including the Disney Studios, the Manhattan Project, the Apple team that invented the Mac, Black Mountain College, and others, in an effort to discover their secret. While they differ strikingly, such groups are distinguished by their intensity, the members' enjoyment of their work, and an intoxicating sense of adventure. In *Organizing Geniuses* (1997), Bennis and Biederman describe life in the group as "often the most fun members ever have. . . . Communities based on merit and passion are rare, and [like my father] people who have been in them never forget them" (29).

Raised on my father's stories and other enchanting myths of Great Groups in family memory and literature, I longed for the thrill of creative collaboration in my own professional work. My previous jobs had both whetted and frustrated that appetite with groups that never quite jelled or that died in hostile environments. In retrospect, I'm sure I came to Syracuse because of my intu-

ition that here was the kind of entrepreneurial environment and grand task that can call forth a Great Group. The conditions were right: an open-ended, high-risk enterprise with big stakes; a climate for collaboration that had been created by extensive discussions and planning for the program; the absurd and unwarranted confidence we all shared that it would succeed. We—the teaching community as a whole—became, for awhile at least, something close to a Great Group. That community collectively invented the idea we call "studios"—an invention we recognize as more than simply the content of our writing classes, when we call something "studio-like" or speak of a "studio move."[2]

Part of what I hope to do today is to evoke that spirit of invention and innovation in our communal memory. I begin with a story of the past. As William Bergquist says in a study of the postmodern organization, "Stories set the norms, values, and aspirations of an organization. The stories of an organization are critical conversations between the present and the past. Organizations exist at the present moment in time. The past life of an organization only exists in the present conversations, that is, in the stories, about the past and in the conversations that are now taking place (via archival records) about past conversations. Similarly, the organization's future is found in current conversations about the future" (1993, 146).

This tenth-year anniversary calls for more than just stories and celebrations, however. Conference organizers also invited two other modes of discourse—analysis and reflection. Woven intricately throughout the conference, these modes triangulate complementary takes or perspectives on the Writing Program. It seemed fitting for me to use these same modes—story, analysis, and reflection—to organize my keynote talk today. In fact, my talk is studio-like in its mixed genres, its moves, its typical three-part structure, its self-reflexivity. I will use these three "moments" of understanding to help us to correlate the program's past with its future and, especially, to answer this question: Is it possible to institutionalize, not merely the content or products of innovation, but the very habit itself of inventing, as a climate or a way of life? How can one sustain into the second decade the spirit of adventure and creativity that characterized the birth and development of the program?

Story: Was the Writing Program a Great Group?

The Writing Program shares some, but not all, of the features that Bennis and Biederman found in the Great Groups they studied.

Here I summarized Bennis and Biederman's portrait of Great Groups as typically young, independent thinkers, optimistic and supremely confident, who collaborate in obsessive pursuit of a common dream.

Those of you who were here in our early days . . . do you recognize us in this picture? Henry Jankiewicz explains how he and other teachers were playing around with powerful new concepts and practices in the early years of the program: "We were in a *frenzy* of discovery, pedagogical and ideological

stimulation, and self-reflection, all coupled to teaching practice. We tried to talk our way through it, to such an extent that program talk became a myth in its own right" (Jankiewicz 1997, n.p.).[3] Such intense talk is characteristic of Great Groups. I think my husband and other partners of program teachers could testify ruefully to our obsessiveness, which took over all social conversations . . . but also to the fun and excitement, the feeling of being high on creative juices. We were so naive—I know I was—that we self-confidently marched ahead and did things that wiser heads told us were impossible.

On the other hand, there are ways we didn't fit the profile of a Great Group, starting most importantly with the composition of the group itself. The membership was not defined, as are typical Great Groups, by the voluntary association of a group of elite specialists eager to dedicate themselves to a task. Instead, we quixotically attempted to inspire the whole teaching community to form itself into a Great Group. By definition, the potential membership was inclusive: full-time faculty and part-time faculty already on staff—some for many years; teaching assistants who flowed in and out of the program yearly; and eventually secretaries and administrative staff members. Therefore, its members were, on the whole, not young (except for the Teaching Assistants [TAs]); not chosen by the group itself; not volunteers attracted by the project; not necessarily brashly self-confident or used to a high degree of autonomy or accustomed to collaboration. Most of all, not universally committed to the common task of building a writing program or to a vision of what such a program might accomplish in service to students, the institution, or society. We were not, in sum, the organizing geniuses that Bennis and Biederman were looking for, nor were we the obvious raw material for a Great Group.

There is, in fact, an inherent contradiction in the whole notion of forming a Great Group based on essentially democratic assumptions about the potential—and the willingness—of virtually anyone to participate. The prototypical Great Groups are like Navy Seals: elite, selected for special talents, highly trained, obsessed, dedicated to the mission, and highly autonomous within their own parameters of responsibility. The Writing Program was more like a peacetime army mobilized for an unexpected crisis: confused, chaotic, filled with underprepared old hands and inexperienced, scared draftees. Unlike such an army, though, we didn't have the right or the authority to assert command and impose strong discipline that goes with having a clear-cut enemy and a universally accepted obligation to a societal objective.

I'm sure the vision of orderly, well-disciplined troops is closer than a Great Group is to what many constituents of writing programs would have us strive for. How many times was I told as a new administrator that the most important thing is to keep the trains running on time! But the image and spirit of a Great Group, not the ideal of bureaucratic efficiency or tight discipline, is what inspired me as a director, although I did not know it then by that name. The Writing Program *chose* the Great Group model, where disparate people are drawn together by mutual commitment to a project and become energized

by the power of collaboration, because we believed that it is a social structure more conducive to creativity and more successful in the long run.

In that choice, we risked chaos. I had realized in the spring of the first year that the structures of the old Freshman English program were so rigid in their constraints, and had such a lock on teachers' minds, that it was necessary to plunge the program into chaos in order to move it at all. After reading Thomas Peters (1987) on managing organizations in times of change, I embraced his idea of "thriving on chaos" as the theme of our first year. As two TAs put it in their wonderful talk at the next year's 4Cs [conference on College Composition and Communication], it was "the year of living dangerously" (Hahn and Thorley 1988).

Here I used illustrations from Peter Senge's book *The Fifth Discipline* (1990) to picture how unproductive chaos can arise when individuals are empowered without satisfying the necessary precondition of alignment or attunement to a shared vision in service of common goals. In our case, as in most writing programs, we could not count on commitment from members who had not necessarily chosen teaching in the program as a personal intellectual project. Although, I acknowledged, it was impossible to draw so many disparate elements into the profound and thrilling engagement that makes and marks a Great Group, it was worth the risk to try.

The story so far suggests an emerging theme: The tensions and oscillations between order and chaos that characterize the dynamics of a creative organization. Next I want to analyze this disequilibrium as the basic character of a complex system. The concept of the Writing Program as a complex system is probably the single most important idea in shaping my own perceptions and judgments of the program. I came to a systems perspective from literary, philosophical, scientific, and familial sources, but it is a hot idea right now among management theorists trying to understand the nature and leadership of postmodern organizations. I will be drawing most heavily today from the work of Stuart Kauffman in his book *At Home in the Universe: The Search for the Laws of Self-Organization and Complexity* (1995). He is a theoretical biologist who believes that evolution of life and human culture is based not only on natural selection but also on a spontaneous order that characterizes all self-organizing systems and can be captured in laws of complexity.

Analysis: How Does the Writing Program Work as a Complex System, and What Does That Have to Do with Living near the Edge of Chaos?

The analysis of complexity applies to any complex, self-organizing system from the level of chemistry to human individuals, social organizations, and the history of culture. A complex system can be self-organizing only if it is open to exchanging energy and matter with the environment. By virtue of their openness, internal diversity, and complexity, self-organizing systems possess the inherent capacity for significant novelty and for unpredictability—that is,

for being inventive. Closed systems, like most machines, can be understood in terms of stability, order, and equilibrium. Open systems, like living ones, require new theories to explain their disorder, instability, change, novelty, freedom, and temporality. Such systems are, Kauffman believes, most successful and adaptable when poised near the edge of chaos: "Networks in the regime near the edge of chaos—this compromise between order and surprise—appear best able to coordinate complex activities and best able to evolve as well" (Kauffman 1995, 26). This dynamic state is compared to liquid water—between gas and ice—or, in Bergquist's wonderful metaphor [borrowed from Prigogine and Stengers (1984)], to fire (Bergquist 1997, 4–5).

There are some features of such systems that I have found very illuminating for understanding the Writing Program but can only touch on briefly. For example, the internal coupling and communication among subsystems and elements within the complex totality or ecosystem seems critical to its evolution as well as to its original birth. Like Goldilocks and the Three Bears, this interaction must be just right—not too little or too much. In Kauffman's theoretical and computer models, an ecology (or life itself) first emerges as such when the diversity and complexity of the system increases its interactions until there are sufficient interconnections among the elements of the system for them to become autocatalytic—able to collectively catalyze the reactions that produce themselves. Remember these ideas—diversity, complexity, communication, interaction, recursion and self-reflexivity—when you think about the significance of the heterogeneity of the Writing Program, the conversations and texts that link us into webs, and the ways internal groups operate and link to one another and to the environment outside the program. In an organization, especially a postmodern learning organization as managerial theorists currently define it, teams are the elements or cells that interact with local autonomy, set up internal boundaries, and coalesce webs to make the entire system inventive (Senge 1990, Bergquist 1993, Peters 1987).

When a system becomes sufficiently complex, diverse, and interactive, it can become supracritical, which triggers an explosion of novelty and more diversity, constituting a second-order, irreversible, fundamental change. Recent studies of the development of technological innovations suggest that this moment is preceded by small incremental steps in which there are huge disparities and variations among experiments, great oscillations between success and failure in individual performances, and lots of errors and failures (Petzinger 1996). Some of these incremental steps must have been taken before I came to Syracuse, and many during the first year. It comforts me to learn from the studies of technological inventions that the higher and the more varied the number of errors and failures, the greater the chance of reaching the supracritical stage of blastoff. However, the process remains a potentially lethal gamble, because it can produce a cascade of novelty in uncoordinated, chaotic interactions—the great fear, I suspect, of the critics who think we should stick to one textbook and one syllabus. If I understand Kauffman rightly, it is important for local eco-

systems—in the Writing Program, these might be various teams or groups working on different studios or projects, for example—to remain subcritical, or more orderly, but to constantly approach the borderline between sub- and supracriticality while trading among themselves in order for the entire ecology to create a controlled chain reaction of invention.

Here I displayed images from Stephen Jay Gould's *Wonderful Life* (1989) to contrast the traditional cone-shaped "tree" of evolution with a bushy tree in which, after an explosion of fundamental new ideas, some survive to branch and diversify further while many—in fact, most—die out.

We could give this picture many interpretations for the explosive moment when invention took off in the Writing Program. For example, the branches might represent generative concepts. Henry mentions "a constellation of powerful concepts" he was given to work with, including process, studio, development, reflection, genre, practice, and design. They also might stand for teaching and learning practices: He lists journals, ethnography, multiple drafting, peer groups, portfolios, and collaborative writing. As he points out, we were an open system, and so these native ideas were complicated by immigration: "the heteroglossic discourses and charged god-terms of the HBC [H.B. Crouse] hallways—social constructionism, deconstruction, postmodern marxism, pluralism, emancipatory pedagogy, techie talk, humanism, remnants of dispossessed New Critical nostalgia" (Jankiewicz 1997, n.p.). These and other old and new ideas also were invading the discourse of the field of composition and rhetoric and, in turn, our program, as we sent faculty out to conferences and set up reading groups and a Resource Room housing books, professional materials, and teaching archives. Teachers named as "generative" for them some of the most robust inventions: for instance, "rhetoric" and "inquiry" as key terms and the practice of creating spaces and times for teacher talk.

The pattern by which evolution slows down after such an explosion is called the learning curve or the *S* curve. According to Kauffman, "it is characteristic of optimization of conflict-laden problems that improvement is rapid initially, and then slows exponentially" (295). In Gould's bush image, the farther away from the original invention, the fewer the main branches, the less the disparity or variety among them, and the greater the diversification into smaller branches. The original landscape of inventions is pruned and refined. Subsequent changes are smaller and smaller and improvements increasingly difficult.

Kauffman explains the learning curve with still another model, that imagines evolution of human and other living systems as taking place on a rugged "fitness landscape." Evolution involves climbing on this landscape to achieve the highest peaks, which represent excellence or high fitness. Peaks can be variously interpreted as representations of what is meant by success or fitness. For us, they might be a great studio design . . . a selected set of successful classroom practices and strategies like peer groups or portfolios . . . a social invention like writing consultancies . . . a format for conferencing. . . a keyword.[4] For reasons of systems dynamics, it becomes increasingly harder to

make much progress once you are on a fairly high peak. If the early development of the Writing Program represented the gamble of falling into chaos, after ten years one must imagine that we now risk the possibility of too much order. We are likely to find ourselves trapped on relatively high fitness peaks, where there is a big cost for coming down and trying another one that isn't likely to prove that much better. At the same time, shifting metaphors back to liquid again, there can be what Bergquist calls "turbulent backwashes," "a return to previous states of the organization" (238). Has anyone noticed a nostalgia for five-paragraph themes and grammar drills lately?

Reflection: Why Must the Writing Program Stay Inventive in Its Second Decade, and How Can It Do So?

One might think it safe enough to rest on the high peaks we have climbed to already. The problem is, however, that the fitness landscape is not fixed, but deforming, and we may suddenly find ourselves ill-adapted to it if we are not capable of sustaining invention in our second decade. There are two reasons. First, the external environment of the Writing Program has already shifted seismically since it began. Syracuse has been through budget restructuring, a shift to a "student-centered university," and now systematic assessment. Behind these local manifestations lie relentless global forces driving change: convergent economic, demographic, technological, and cultural transformations that not only affect institutions, their environments, and their constituencies, but also contribute to subtler shifts in how people perceive and value the work of colleges and universities as responsive to human and societal needs. The inventions by the Writing Program of the first decade are largely irreversible, not individually but in the sense that they changed a pattern of behaviors and values paradigmatically. But they will not suffice in the second decade. Second, our fitness landscape is deformed by the fact that we are coevolving on it—say, on the university landscape, on the higher education landscape, on the landscape of nonprofit institutions, and so on—with other systems: other units of the institution, other educational institutions, other sectors of the economy, and so on through the ecological layers. Coevolving systems constantly change the landscape for one another and can develop complementary as well as competitive relationships.

All this tells us that we must continue to sustain the flexible capacity and habit of invention in order to thrive. But how shall we do that? The models of systems dynamics that I've been reading suggest that second-order changes of the sort that create a new system don't happen twice. But human beings continue to grow and change throughout their lives, even though they develop most rapidly in early years. Organisms continue to evolve if challenged by rapidly changing fitness landscapes. Organizations often thrive a long time . . . although they have definite life cycles and eventually die or turn into something else . . . and some, like Disney studios, have even reinvented themselves

as Great Groups. The first stage of the Writing Program was romance, and romances quiet down and lose their thrill. But romances can turn into fruitful marriages, and Great Groups can turn into learning organizations. Like such marriages and the partners in them, there will be cycles with plateaus, leaps of growth, stagnation and renewals, periodically generating new bursts of creativity. The Writing Program is capable of infinite and unpredictable self-transformation as long as it remains an open system.

In closing, I want to think a bit about signs that we are reaching the end of the first run of invention and the portents for a second wave. It's fairly easy to see that a variety of impersonal forces, mediated by coevolution with our many partners on various fitness landscapes, has greatly changed the conditions for creativity in the Writing Program. We might see many of these changes as negative, but they also provide new opportunities for creative adaptation rather than simply assimilation and reaction.

Here, emphasizing luck and unpredictability, I pointed to major changes requiring us to rebalance the "fundamental harmony" of the program: among them, faculty growth, new leadership, and the potential transformation afforded by a new doctoral program. Following Kauffman (the "butterfly effect"), I suggested that small moves in the hands of teachers were as likely to trigger invention as external forces or large-scale changes: "one new friendship. . . one overheard conversation. . . one semester of service on a committee. . . one day in the life of a writing studio. . . a book or article shared with others. . . an offhand remark."

I have tried today to imagine the Writing Program members as forming the concentric circles that represent the wisdom of the system as a whole. Not only is the Writing Program a complex system, but its members are potential systems thinkers. It is both valuable and necessary for a critical mass of program members to make the program aware of its systems nature and collectively reflective about the evolution of the Writing Program as a complex system.

Here I described how my own work on invention crosses scholarly, teaching, and administrative boundaries, and linked it reciprocally to teachers' similar integrations.

At the same time, I want to warn of the limits of such awareness and of reflection itself. Kauffman emphasizes, as do others who apply these theories to leadership and management, that the full meaning and consequences of our own actions are beyond our ken. We are not gods, and we have no god's eye view of the fitness landscape we climb on. We are stuck, I think, in strange loops of causality where trying to observe our own part in them is like trying to contemplate the back—or the inside—of our own heads. It's a good thing, because this measure of uncertainty means that complex systems are realms of human freedom. As Kauffman says, "It is not as though we could find a stance with either moral or secular certainty. We make our worlds together. All we can do is be locally wise, even though our own best efforts will ultimately create the conditions that lead to our transformations to utterly unforeseeable

ways of being. We can only strut and fret our hour, yet this is our own and only role in the place. We ought, then, play it proudly but humbly" (303).

A Reflective Gloss: Telling and Embodying Stories of Identity

Both speech and silence transgress.

Zen saying

When administrators formally address an academic community, their rhetoric serves a variety of ceremonial, informational, and inspirational purposes: for instance, summarizing and interpreting the current state of affairs, taking stock of accomplishments, setting an agenda or identifying problems, confronting a crisis, or grieving together over a shared tragedy. Underlying all these is a function identified by Howard Gardner as common to the effective leaders he studied: "They told stories—in so many words—about themselves and their groups, about where they were coming from and where they were headed, about what was to be feared, struggled against, and dreamed about" (1995, 14). We see such performances as rhetorical action. Gardner analyzes them as "cognitive" tools of leadership: enabling ideas to be formulated symbolically and transacted between leaders and those they try to influence (the audience or "collaborators" in storytelling.) I will gloss my speech from both angles: as rhetorical performance and as intellectual work. In Gardner's terms, my tenth-anniversary address is an effort to tell the Writing Program its own story.

The role of oratory in writing program administration has always intrigued me because of the problematic relation historically between women and public speaking. The disapproval, condemnation, or downright prohibition of American women's oratory through most of the nineteenth century reflected (and kept in force) the two-thousand year history of women's exclusion from leadership in the public sphere (Campbell 1993). The same negative link between gendered rhetoric and gendered politics is mirrored in the American academy, where women students at Oberlin couldn't deliver their own commencement speeches until 1874 (Conway 1995, 205–207) and women faculty today, despite their increasing numbers, have yet to gain equal access to institutional leadership roles.

Women WPAs traditionally have been fewer in number and more likely than their male counterparts to be untenured, untitled, subordinate, and powerless (Enos 1996). Few have held positions like mine, as a tenured director and chair of a writing department. Even as women move into administrative positions that legitimate them as leaders, they endure (from women as well as men) suspicion, resentment, and resistance to their rhetorical presence and their institutional power. Indeed, they turn such reproaches and strictures on themselves. Women WPAs are often ambivalent about the power of their office and conflicted about their own ethos as strong central leaders (especially

what Gardner and others call "visionary leaders"). Many, perceiving any institutional authority as inherently oppressive and distrusting powerful rhetorics, renounce their own authority, mute their voices, and espouse a decentered, collaborative model of leadership.[5]

The profound identification of rhetoric with material power, and their mutual interdependence and feedback, are inscribed in our consciousness and historical experience, in the academy no less than in other public spaces. In my own experience, my right as WPA to speak publicly (or to be heard as serious) was closely tied to my right to aspire to strong leadership; resistance to one was denial of the other. Early on, my desire to speak to the Writing Program at large, especially in public address, was discouraged by many colleagues as an inappropriate way of singularizing myself in the role of director. Meanwhile, in other quarters of the university an administrator would introduce me to peers—jokingly—as someone who always talked too much and wrote too much, as if my occupying a public rhetorical space in the academy were amusingly presumptuous.

I consciously rejected these attitudes. They never silenced my public voice; indeed, I came ever more strongly to believe that it is right for writing program administrators to aspire to leadership as an honorable role, to explore and analyze the role of rhetoric in administration, to make creative and ethical use of the rhetorical power their office (and their training) lends them. Yet I am scarred enough by this history that I literally find it difficult to write here of my talk as a "speech"; embarrassing to acknowledge frankly that it was designed to accomplish the storytelling functions of leaders (although I did not read Gardner's analysis until recently); impossible to refer directly to myself as a "leader" ("WPA" is a convenient euphemism). (No wonder it feels risky: As Jill Ker Conway [1998] explains, I am writing against the grain of the whole, diffident tradition of women's autobiography, which denies and conceals our own agency as leaders and rhetoricians.) I, too, have spent a lot of time decentering my own authority as an administrator and constructing collaborative and consultative arrangements to share power: specifically, the powers of symbolic action and of intellectual work to shape writing programs (Phelps 1995). Much of this shows up in the story I told the Writing Program about itself.

According to Gardner, the stories leaders tell their collaborators—the audience—are most deeply ones of personal and group identity. They are developmental, addressing the formation and evolution of identity over time: here, the identities of the Writing Program and of individuals in their capacity as its members. "Leaders present a dynamic perspective to their followers: not just a headline or snapshot, but a drama that unfolds over time, in which they—leaders and followers—are the principal characters or heroes. Together, they have embarked on a journey in pursuit of certain goals, and along the way and into the future, they can expect to encounter certain obstacles or resistances that must be overcome." The challenge is that "audience members come

equipped with many stories that have already been told and retold in their homes, their societies, and their domains. The stories of the leader—be they traditional or novel—must compete with many other extant stories, and if the new stories are to succeed, they must transplant, suppress, complement, or in some measure outweigh the earlier stories, as well as contemporary oppositional 'coun:erstories'" (Gardner 1995, 14).

I faced an obvious rhetorical difficulty in telling a story of identity to the Writing Program at that time. As a postadministrator—participant and privileged interpreter of the past—I was licensed to tell a narrative of remembrance. But my friend Keith Gilyard, then director of the Writing Program, had the right and duty to relate his own vision of its immediate past, present, and future, inevitably reinterpreting that evoked memory and opening new directions for the program's evolving identity. Although I was asked to inspire optimism in the Writing Program's future, rhetorical tact was called for to avoid even the appearance of usurping Keith's role in leading that development.

The dynamic nature of leaders' stories actually helps to solve this dilemma because it means anyone telling the program its own story is actually positioned at a unique point in time in a unique rhetorical stance (kairos). Mine, framed in April 1997 as a retrospective analysis with no direct responsibility for a future agenda, contrasts interestingly with Keith's recent speech beginning his last year as director (August 1998). He struck a delicate balance between two goals: setting a short-term agenda for accomplishment during the year-to-come and reflecting on the lessons he had learned about writing program administration so as to guide us in seeking a new director. Both strands of his address drew on the wisdom of his experience to emphasize realism in the audience's goals and expectations as a way of ensuring success.

Similarly, I addressed my own rhetorical constraint less in temporal terms (by choosing memory over imaginative projection) than by withdrawing to a reflective distance in my perspective on the story itself. By describing the Writing Program as a complex system, I focused in both past and future on the dynamics of identity formation rather than the specific outcomes of that process: on the nature of institutional invention and my audience's role in it rather than on what had been or was to be invented. Particulars of the social organization, curriculum, or projects are mentioned in passing to evoke for veterans vivid memories of forging those elements of the program's identity, while conveying to newcomers that these richly specific and local features are not accidents, but creations of real people sitting nearby.

In Gardner's model, leaders not only "relate" their stories through their words, equations, or creations, but also embody them "by the kinds of lives they themselves lead and, through example, seek to inspire in their followers" (10). Gardner refers not to leaders' personal lives but to their work in the domain they influence: for Einstein, the way he thinks scientifically; for a writing program administrator, the way she reads, writes, analyzes, reflects, teaches, and administers. Therefore, in telling the Writing Program its story,

an administrator is also embodying or modeling that story. This principle is well understood by the audience I addressed in my speech, who know it as a teaching practice characteristic of our writing studios, repeated in forms from the "mini-studios" enacting writing pedagogy with new teachers to the syllabi and assignments in which teachers perform the very inquiry, analysis, reflection, or rhetorical strategies they invite students to learn.[6] Experienced studio teachers would recognize (and I pointed out to newcomers) that my three-part organization echoes the frequent pattern of writing studio courses; that, like studio teaching, it both incorporates and names practices such as narrative, analysis, and reflection—keynoting for the conference its three modes of discourse; that it makes certain intellectual and rhetorical "moves" that we practice and teach in writing classes.

One of those recognizable studio moves is to identify one's own rhetoric and intellectual work closely with the comparable work of students (the audience) while connecting both into larger networks of conversation and community. On a rhetorical level, the strategies I used served to identify what appears to be a highly formal genre of public address with the oral traditions of the audience, often designated the "lore" of a practitioner community (on lore, see North 1987, Harkin 1991, Phelps 1991, Rankin 1991, Ray 1993, and Franke in progress). However, in my quotations and references I also invoke the writings of this community, which, in genres from published in-house reflective essays to archived assignments and syllabi are as much the repository of teaching knowledge (a highly reflective form of lore) as is the oral tradition of teacher talk. In allusions to teachers' rhetoric I remind them of the broad range of their own communal speech and writing just as my own address exemplifies public speech but has textual form (accessible to teachers in our archives) and refers to related scholarly writing and talks I am working on.

My speech exemplifies writing program administration as intellectual work in two rather obvious senses. First, it reveals the degree to which my activities and goals as a WPA rested on a conceptual model that I have continued to develop in other settings. Second, it displays research and theorizing I did specifically for the speech. But the issue is more subtle: Intellectual work as a WPA can't be purely personal and also be effective. This speech performs the intellectual work *of* writing program administration (as distinct from reporting my own intellectual projects as a scholar who is only incidentally a writing program administrator) in the way it attempts to thematize the interconnectivity of intellectual work as it is experienced by and between myself and my audience. This narrative of connection is both related and embodied by the rhetoric of the speech: the parallels, mirror images, complementarities, and mutual influence that link my spoken rhetoric and writing with those of the audience. My studio-like rhetoric not only identifies my formal speech with a common teaching language and practice, it also connects my intellectual work in conceiving administration with the intellectual work of the faculty and teaching staff, both as writing instructors and as program inventors themselves. It is *invention* that

I used to tie all these together: invention recognized as a common, shared principle in our teaching (studio designs), in program building, in leadership, in research, in writing.

At the same time, I situated my intellectual work (and so that of the program—the teaching community, my audience, my collaborators in storytelling) in larger frames. In one frame, I manifested and traced a single intellectual project on invention and systems thinking across several rhetorical "sites" conventionally identified with research, teaching, and administration, echoing recommendations from a national commission on which I served (MLA Commission on Professional Service 1996). In the local context, these connections matter because it is of perpetual concern to program members that its full-time research faculty (understood as leaders regardless of specific administrative duties and titles) remain fully integrated with other groups in carrying out the responsibilities of the teaching program. Full-time research and graduate faculty, working alongside practitioners and novice graduate students, need to guard constantly against separating the program's constituencies by creating or exaggerating disconnections and discontinuities (generally hierarchical in impact) between their own scholarship and the intellectual work of teachers or, for that matter, of students.

However, in making this integration, I did not simply present myself (and by implication other faculty leaders in the program) as mediating between a teaching community and a (distantly removed) research community. Rather, I invoked the connection between the mixed audience's intellectual work and mine as, in both cases, resting on multiple rhetorical sites: their work in the classroom, their writings and presentations at 4Cs; my work drawing on other disciplines, theirs as already displaying a mix of fields. I also invoked connection through my conceptualization of writing program administration as invention enacted (by us together) in the program and then resituated in the discipline through my writing for a scholarly volume, modeling similar ways they have recontextualized their own intellectual work in sites of disciplinary or public rhetoric.

In the end, to articulate the program's identity through the story I told was not, I hope and believe, to singularize my own work as a leader but to understand any leader's symbolic work, as even Gardner (focusing on extraordinary leaders) recognizes, to be a collaboration with the rhetoric of an audience, as narrators of complementary, intertwining, and counter stories. In this case, my speech tried not only to effect that collaboration, but in the story of the Great Group and the focus on systemic invention, to recognize and comment on its implications for all those in a group to play the role of leaders, or what I called inventors, of writing programs. I do not want to conceal, however, another message conveyed by publishing the speech and writing this gloss. In publicly playing the storytelling role to the hilt—as well as I was able—and interpreting it here in the context of leadership as intellectual and rhetorical work, I am arguing, especially to women inclined to deny or renounce authority in or for

themselves, that it can be ethical to aspire to and wield such powers, despite their psychic and social costs (cf. Bizzell 1995). Those powers are rooted equally in the office and institution, in our deeds, in the rhetorical situation, and in our trained rhetorical abilities. If we do not take them up as leaders, what are we then—bureaucrats?

I have tried to imagine such an ethical practice of administration and its rhetoric here in terms of continuities. On one level, my analysis represents intellectual work as a continuity over time in forming and developing an institutional structure, embodied in the shifting terms and forms of its rhetoric as practiced most visibly by its formal leaders. In our speeches, both Keith and I, at different points in time relative to our leadership role, situated ourselves in such a continuity shared with other leaders, past and future, letting go of our institutional power and recognizing its transience even as we used it. From another perspective, continuities are lateral and lie in the interconnectivity I tried to model and evoke, making our many forms of rhetoric the conduit or medium through which the intellectual projects of program members interpenetrate one another and reach out to or draw on our academic fields and public worlds. In this way, leadership, with its special access to and need for public rhetoric, is neither discounted nor restricted to the one figure who, as writing program administrator, presently stands most prominently in this symbolic and material relationship to an institution or program. In my address, I tried to use the privilege of speech accorded a past leader to understand, express, celebrate, and perpetuate these continuities.

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Notes

1. The text of the speech has been abbreviated and edited to meet space constraints. The full text (Phelps 1998) is available on the World Wide Web.

2. A writing studio as developed at Syracuse is a specialized form of a learning environment long familiar to other fields of performance and practice (it has served as metaphor for more than one composition program). See Bloomer 1998 and Schön 1987, Part Two, for descriptions of the architecture studio as a prototype.

3. Jankiewicz's (1997) remarks appeared subsequent to this conference in an electronically published anniversary issue of the Writing Program's occasional journal *Reflections in Writing*, available on the World Wide Web.

4. Writing consultancies budget assignments for teachers to tutor students and small groups, mentor other teachers, and work across the university in classes, computer clusters, program projects, and other sites to improve writing and learning.

5. For a range of nuanced considerations of collaboration and power in writing program administration, see the special issue of *WPA* on this topic (Gunner 1998).

6. David Franke's dissertation (in progress) on written genres of teaching in the Writing Program analyzes how studio teachers model literacy practices and rhetorical strategies for students in their syllabi and written assignments.

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Tim Peeples currently serves as Director of Writing Across the Curriculum and the Writing Center at Elon College. His WPA scholarship centers around the interrelationships between structural and social spaces within academic organization as they impact post-secondary writing instruction, research, and practice. His dissertation, "(Re)Writing the WPA as a Subject of Organizational Space," a critical analysis of the positions WPAs hold within academe, reflects this area of inquiry. It also reflects his more general focus on the institutional contexts of writing as they influence pedagogy and the procedural knowledges needed for effective writing, especially within workplace contexts.

Louise Wetherbee Phelps is Professor of Writing and English and former director of the Writing Program at Syracuse University, where she currently directs graduate studies in Composition and Cultural Rhetoric. Recent publications include *Feminine Principles and Women's Experience in American Composition and Rhetoric* (1995), *Composition in Four Keys* (1995), and essays on composition theory, teaching, and administrative practice. A consultant on writing program administration, she held an American Council on Education Fellowship to study leadership in higher education and recently participated in an MLA Commission that developed an alternative model of faculty work. She is working on book projects in feminism, design of writing assignments, and graduate pedagogy.

Shirley K Rose is Associate Professor of English at Purdue University. She has served as Director of Graduate Assistants at Eastern Michigan University and as Director of Composition Faculty Development at San Diego State University. At Purdue, she alternates as Director of Composition with Irwin Weiser, mentors teaching assistants in the Introductory Writing Program, and recently has taught a graduate seminar in Writing Program Administration. She has published essays on issues in writing program administration in *Col-*

lege Composition and Communication, *WPA*, *Journal of Teaching Writing*, and *Journal of Language and Learning Across the Disciplines*.

Mark Schaub was Director of the Freshman English Program at the American University at Cairo in Cairo, Egypt from January 1996 through May 1999. In that capacity, he supervised a staff of thirty full-time instructors and administered a program-wide portfolio evaluation system. In June 1999, he joined the faculty at Grand Valley State University in Michigan. His research and teaching interests include second language writing, professional writing, and writing program administration.

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Kathleen Blake Yancey is Associate Professor of English and Director of the University of North Carolina at Charlotte National Writing Project site. She teaches courses ranging from first-year writing to the tutoring of writing to graduate seminars in rhetorical theory. With Brian Huot, she founded and edits *Assessing Writing*, and she has edited or co-edited several collections of essays, most recently *Situating Portfolios: Four Perspectives*, with Irwin Weiser. She also has authored *Reflection in the Writing Classroom*, a study that theorizes and makes plain the practice of using reflection to teach writing. In 1995 and 1996, Yancey co-taught the WPA Workshop; from 1995–1998, she was on the Executive Board of Writing Program Administration; and in January 1999 she became Vice-President of WPA.

The Writing Program Administrator as Researcher

With the publication of this book, Shirley Rose and Irwin Weiser open up a new area of inquiry: the writing program administrator as researcher. Although the WPA's contribution to writing faculty development and curriculum development is widely recognized, less well-known is the important role research plays. The aim of this collection is to develop that understanding as well as help others identify additional opportunities for significant intellectual work.

The essays in this collection describe inquiry that has been conducted by WPAs whose writing programs are the sites of both research and application. The book is divided into two parts to reflect the differences in contributors' emphases. Part I describes and conceptualizes specific research projects conducted by WPAs, providing a detailed picture of the richness and complexity of administrative research. In Part II, the contributors raise and reflect on issues about WPA research in general, drawing on concrete experiences of particular WPAs and specific writing programs. Together, the essays demonstrate the recursive interplay that characterizes this kind of inquiry: effective WPAs reflect before acting, but they also reflect upon the actions they take.

The Writing Program Administrator as Researcher will interest administrators of many different kinds of writing programs, including first-year composition, writing across the curriculum, writing centers, and professional writing programs.

Shirley K Rose is Associate Professor of English at Purdue University, where she has recently completed a term as Director of Composition. Currently, she serves as Assistant Head of the English Department, mentors teaching assistants in the introductory writing program, and teaches graduate courses in writing program administration. She has published essays in *College English, College Composition and Communication, WPA: Writing Program Administration, Journal of Teaching Writing, Rhetoric Review,* and *Journal of Language and Learning Across the Disciplines.*

Irwin Weiser is Professor of English at Purdue University, where he directed the developmental writing program and serves as Director of Composition. Weiser teaches introductory writing, a practicum for new composition teachers, graduate courses in composition research, WAC theory and practice, and writing assessment.

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